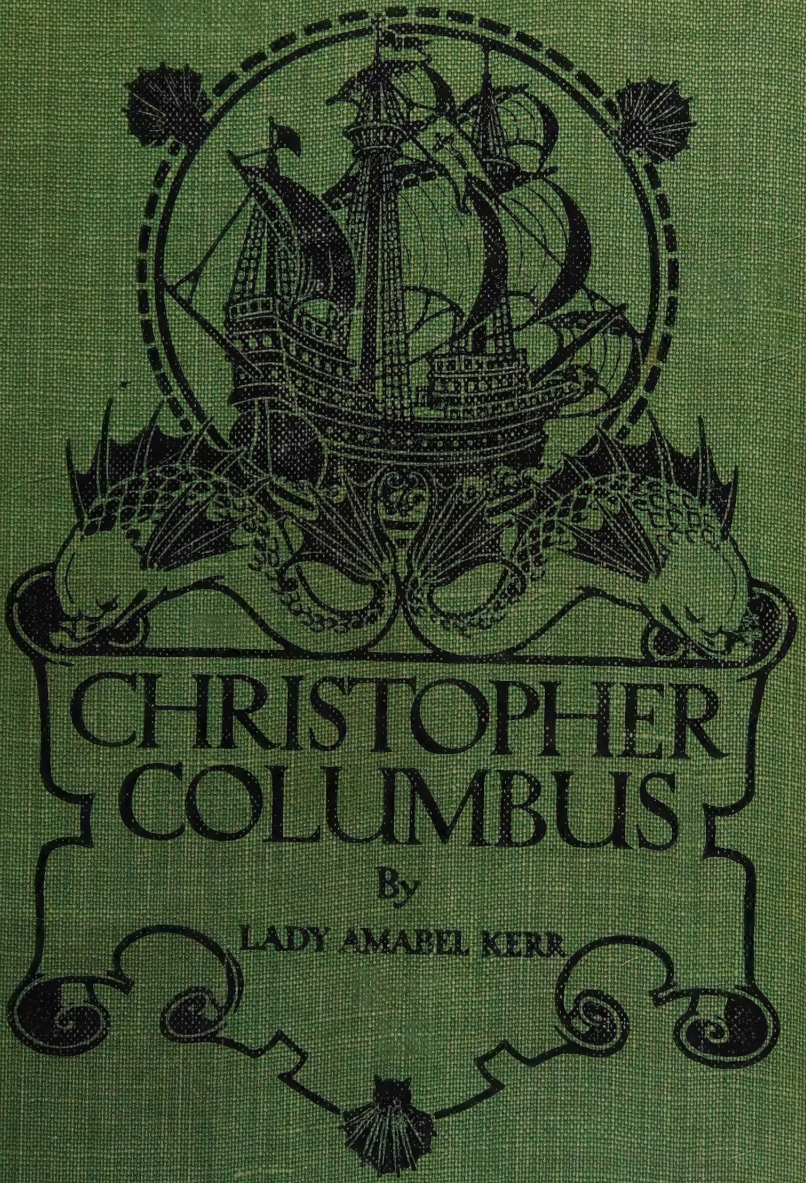

# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

By

LADY AMABEL KERR

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Kerr, Amabel, Lady, 1846-1906.
Christopher Columbus, by Lady

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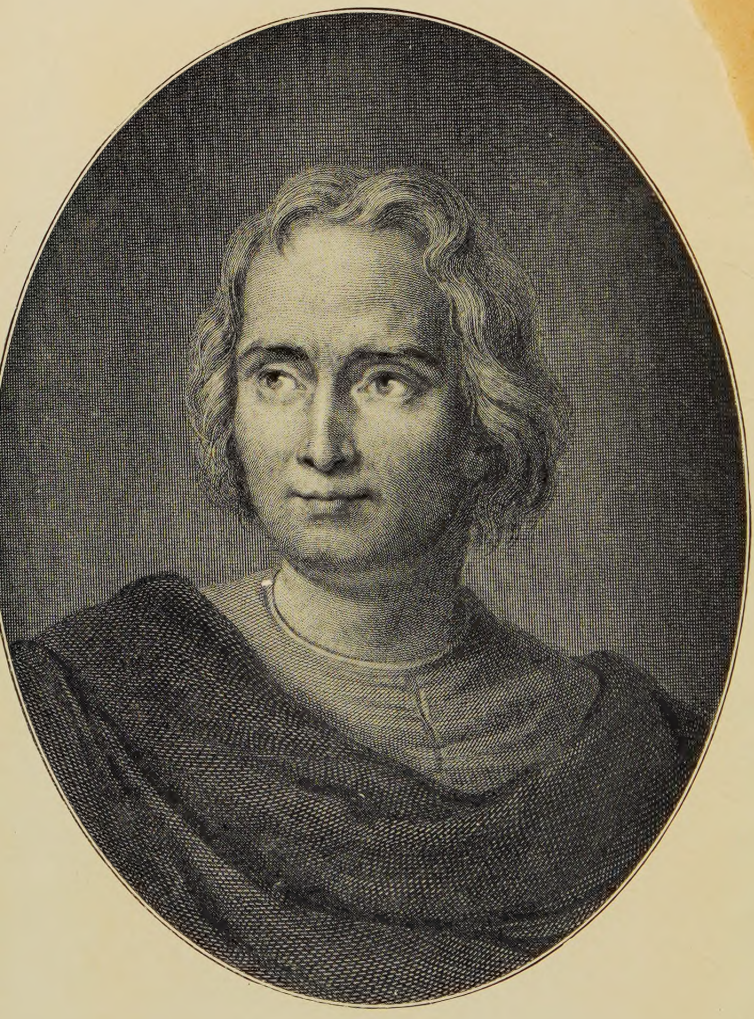

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

From the portrait at the Ministry of Marine, Madrid.

[*Frontispiece.*

# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

BY

LADY AMABEL KERR

LONDON
CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
69 SOUTHWARK BRIDGE ROAD, S.E.
B. HERDER
17 SOUTH BROADWAY, ST LOUIS, MO.
1908

# PREFATORY NOTE

THE short life of Christopher Columbus which is here presented to the reader was begun by the late Lady Amabel Kerr shortly after the fourth centenary of the discovery of America celebrated in 1892. Written as it was in the intervals of her many various occupations and good works, she seems to have felt that the sketch needed further revision; but for this no convenient opportunity ever presented itself, and down to the time of her regretted death, the manuscript, though completed, was never finally prepared for the press. In the interval since its inception many important works upon Columbus have seen the light—notably the studies of M. Henri Vignaud, some of those of M. Harrisse, the sumptuous publication of Mr J. B. Thacher, and more especially sundry volumes of the great *Raccolta Colombiana* of the Genoese commission.

The net result of all this modern research has been to throw a good deal of suspicion upon certain traditional beliefs regarding the early years of the great Admiral. As it seemed desirable to take some account of these new developments, the writer was asked by the Committee of the Catholic Truth Society to look

through Lady Amabel's manuscript, and to add a few notes where it seemed desirable. This he has endeavoured to do, but the original text, as penned by the author, has been left practically unchanged, and the additions, which hardly affect more than the first few chapters, have been clearly indicated and confined to the narrowest limits. It should be pointed out that when the views expressed in the text have been modified or controverted in the notes, the text generally represents an opinion held until quite lately by the majority of writers, both Catholic and non-Catholic. Further, it can hardly be doubted that if Lady Amabel Kerr had seen the criticisms to which the work of Count Roselly de Lorgues, whom she mainly follows, has been subjected in recent years, she would herself have been the first to admit their force.

By way of rendering this little book more attractive to youthful readers, a certain number of illustrations have been added, mostly taken from the famous collection of voyages of Theodor de Bry and engraved within a hundred years of Columbus's own lifetime.

HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

31 FARM STREET, W.,
*24th September* 1908.

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# INTRODUCTION

MORE lives of Christopher Columbus have been written than, perhaps, of any other individual. At the time of the centenary celebration in 1892 there existed in print six hundred biographies, without counting the many incidental lives in other books. So it stands to reason that there does not remain much that is new to say about him. Although the greater part of his own writings has perished, the wealth of detail that has been handed down in the summaries of his journals, in his letters, and in the contemporary records of his companions, furnish material which is almost bewildering. In fact, exterior details relating to native habits, products, coast indentations, skirmishes, treachery, cruelty, etc., etc., exist almost unto tediousness, and have been told and retold so often as to be worn threadbare; so that it is at times difficult to extract and recollect the discoverer's personality from their midst.

But it is the personality of Columbus, not what he achieved, which makes his life different from that of any other discoverer or adventurer of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Through and above the details of his exploits there stands forth that one grand, simple

figure, loyal unto death, gravely and steadfastly preoccupied with his one idea, which everyone around him, from king to cabin-boy, insisted on forgetting. His world was a different one from that of those with whom he came in contact. He was beyond his age, a pioneer alongside of his contemporaries, with the result that, in spite of his charity, his command, his studious kindness, and his noble forgiveness of injuries, he failed to be in touch with those who served him, or to take hold of the hearts of men, as he might have done had he been less great.

Some chosen few, such as his brothers, the "two friars," Jaime Ferrer, and Isabella, in her unbiassed moments, understood him; but to the mass of his companions, men who would have devotedly followed a more free-booting commander to the death, he acted as a repellent and evoked their selfishness. Even those among his loyal followers whose fidelity in the midst of the general disloyalty is as refreshing as wells of water in the desert, men like Mendez, Barrantes, and Carvajal, even they spent themselves for him more from devotion to duty than from personal devotion to himself.

His personality is unique. At the time when he lived, the ideal of a holy life in the world, as a choice of state, was practically unknown. The mediæval tendency which led men and women who desired to serve God to leave the world as something hopelessly bad, still prevailed; and Columbus's life, devoted to the service of God in an altogether secular vocation, in obedience to His call, was exceptional.

He was even in early manhood so devoted to the

things of God, so fervent and exact in his religious practices, and, moreover, so intimate with and in sympathy with the life of the cloister, that it might have been safely predicted that he would enter religion after the death of his first wife. This might have been the case had Doña Felipa died a few years sooner; but by the time he was left a widower his vocation in life had been otherwise decided, and obeyed, as a distinct call from God. The fervour of discovery had been by that time kindled within him; but it was for God alone that he fanned the flame. "The Redeemer, the Word made flesh, showed me the way," is an expression used by him on more than one occasion. "The Lord showed Himself favourable to my desire," he wrote while reviewing his past career in the solitude of his castaway life in Jamaica in 1503. "He gave unto me the spirit of understanding, and opened my intelligence in an almost visible manner."[1]

Mathematics and science, as he goes on to say, had barely anything to do with his discoveries; and his first ideas, and the resolution which ensured their fulfilment, came from God alone.

Thus, in following the career of Columbus along its well-beaten track, it must always be borne in mind that his life was the following of a vocation. The glory of God, the exaltation of the Church, the conversion of souls were, in spite of the circumstances which at times clouded, and perhaps lowered his aim, his object as exclusively as they could have been had he been bound to their furtherance by a religious vow. It is thus that his career was understood by

[1] *Libro de las profecias*, Fol. iv.

those who knew him; and it is symptomatic of this, that the only portrait of the great discoverer which has even a semblance of authenticity was depicted by his quondam companion, Juan de la Cosa, in his famous chart, under the figure of St. Christopher bearing Christ across the water. His unswerving devotion to this end can alone explain the simplicity of his indifference to disappointment, and the equal simplicity of his acceptance of the humiliations and contradictions which were the accompaniment of his life.

# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY DAYS

### 1446 (?)–1485

In the latter half of the fifteenth century the world was seething with new life, and the slow mind of man was becoming aware both of the latent powers of his own intellect, and the secrets possibly hidden in the earth over which he had been given dominion. At the same time that printing was opening new realms of mental activity, a desire was astir in the hearts of men to know something more about the physical earth. For centuries they had been content to make the most of what was already known; now, however, a desire grew to know more; and, as is always the case with this kind of dumb desire, men were raised up to put it into words and carry it into practice. It was while this spirit was astir, and being kindled into a flame by Prince Henry the Navigator and his brave captains, that Christopher Columbus was born at Genoa, then one of the principal maritime powers of Europe.

It seems strange that the date of this great man's

birth should be wrapped in obscurity, and that the doubt should range over at least ten years, between, that is to say, 1436 and 1446. There is no record of his birth, the inference from stray remarks made by himself in his journals and letters being his biographers' only guide; and it is sufficient to say that these words tell equally strongly in favour of either date. The doubt does not signify much, for the work of his life was accomplished just the same whether he died at the age of sixty or seventy; still, as it is an open question, the later date seems the more probable,[1] as the spirit of daring and enterprise which actuated his first discovery is more fitting to the vigour of manhood than to what, in those days, at any rate, was considered as approaching old age. Longevity was not as great four centuries ago as it is now, and it seems improbable that a man so impressionable to the influence of circumstances that toil and anxiety turned his hair white by the time he was thirty, should have accomplished three-fourths of his great task in the seventh decade of his life.

Christopher's father, Domenico, followed the calling of a wool-comber, and at that trade his four sons worked in succession. Columbus's biographers lay great stress on the fact that, though a wool-comber, Domenico Colombo was a man of noble family.[2]

[1] The results of recent research in the archives of Genoa have shown that any date earlier than 1446 is altogether impossible, and M. Henri Vignaud, in his *Études Critiques*, Paris, 1905, has given good reason for believing that the true year is 1451.—[ED.]

[2] The name Colombo was undoubtedly borne by more than one noble family in this part of Italy, notably at Piacenza, but as no evidence exists that the father or grandfather of the explorer were

Fernando, the Admiral's son, is the only one who does not care to prove this point. "I am of opinion," he says, "that I should derive less dignity from any nobility of ancestry, than from being the son of such a father."

However, noble or not, he was at the time of his eldest son Christopher's birth in easy circumstances, and lived on a little property of his own outside the walls of Genoa; but his fortunes gradually declined, and he was, finally, entirely dependent on his sons for support. He and his wife must have been remarkable people, for no doubt their sons owed the manliness, loyalty, and greatness of soul which characterized them in common to the stamp impressed upon them in early days under their parents' roof.

In Christopher's case home life was interrupted by two years at the University of Pavia.[1] Though he was a mere child during his sojourn there, to this rudimentary training may be ascribed his desire for culture and taste for learning which made him so unlike the other mariners of the age. For two years after his

anything but wool-combers, recent investigators have charged Christopher and his son with prevarication. But they may have honestly and even rightly believed that some tie of blood, even if remote, connected them with the citizens of rank who bore the same name.—[ED.]

[1] This is another assertion upon which the researches of the last fifteen years have cast grave doubt. It rests only upon the statement of the explorer's son, Fernando, copied by Las Casas and others. On the whole it seems most probable that Columbus went to a school at Genoa in the Via di Pavia, the existence of which is otherwise known to us. Some misunderstanding of this fact may have led Fernando into error.—[ED.]

residence at Pavia he worked with his father, but then the maritime traditions of his country, and the spirit of enterprise rife in the air, seized hold upon him, as they did later upon Bartholomew, the third son, and at the age of fourteen he took to a seafaring career.

All sea life in the Mediterranean in those days savoured of what we should call piracy. Christopher served under the flag of two cousins, known as the elder and younger Colombo,[1] and obtained experience and distinction in various sea-fights between the galleys of the different maritime powers of Southern Europe. One such fight it was which changed his whole career, and converted the fighting sea-rover into the discoverer, chosen by Providence to change the face of the globe. Fernando, the Admiral's son, the constant companion of the last six years of his life, who drew from his father's own lips the facts which he afterwards reduced to a biography, relates that about the year 1470, while Columbus was in command of a caravel in an expedition under the above-mentioned Colombo the younger, a fierce fight took place off Lisbon with a Venetian fleet laden with Flemish merchandise. The Venetian galley grappled by Columbus's vessel caught fire, and both were consumed. The crews jumped overboard, and Christopher swam on shore with the support of one of the great galley-sweeps, being,

[1] That these sea-rovers were cousins of Christopher Columbus is a mere inference of the earlier biographers for which there is no serious warrant. On the contrary, recent research has made it clear that they could not have been relatives. The younger Colombo was certainly a Frenchman.—[ED.]

as Fernando says, "preserved by God for greater things."[1]

Thus did he land in Portugal, which he made his home for, more or less, fifteen years, and to which he offered the gift of his great idea, only to have it thrown back scornfully in his face. When he was wrecked he found his brother Bartholomew established for the time being in Lisbon, earning his living by drawing charts, in which art he had attained great perfection. Thus, by joining him, the elder brother found home and trade ready to hand. But he was soon linked to Portugal by still closer ties; for at the Convent of All Saints, where he habitually heard Mass, he met, and eventually married Doña Felipa de Perestrello. Her father, no longer living, had been one of the most adventurous of Prince Henry's captains, and had been given possession of the island of Porto Santo, one of the Madeira group discovered by him. There, or at Lisbon, Christopher with his wife and wife's mother dwelt for some years, and there his eldest son Diego was born.

Perestrello's widow had in her possession all her husband's notes and charts, and these she gave to Columbus to study;[2] and probably they had much to do with concentrating his maritime taste and spirit of

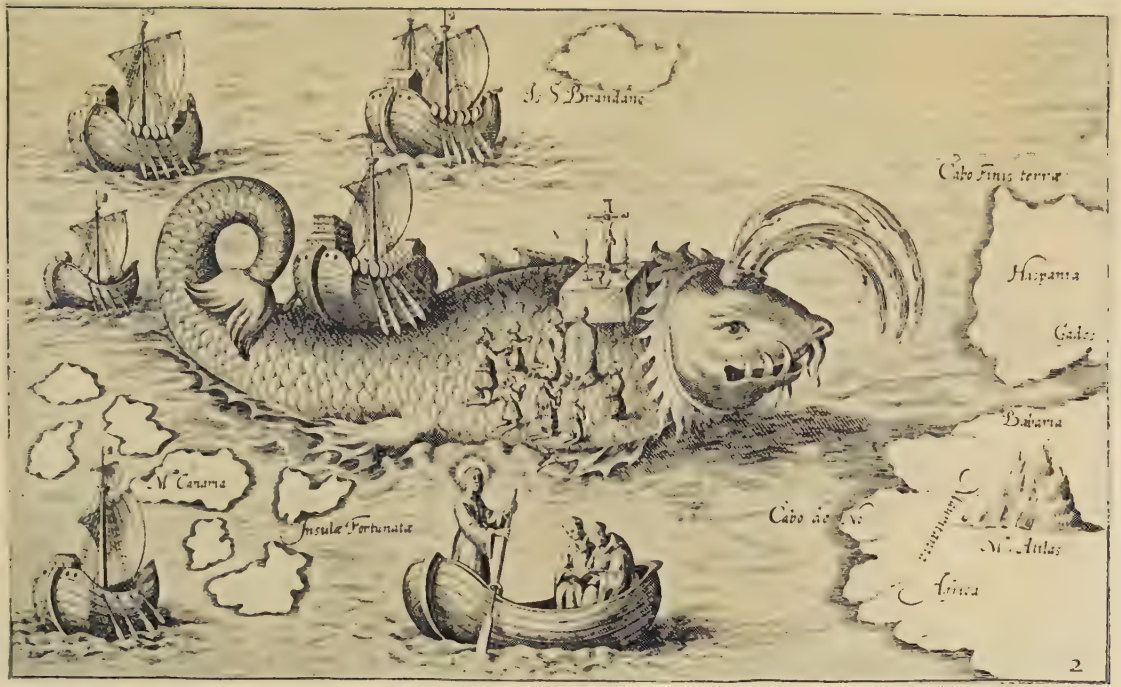
[1] *Hist. del Almirante*, cap 5. It is possible that here also Fernando's enthusiastic devotion to his father has embroidered the facts of a story imperfectly remembered after the lapse of many years.—[ED.]

[2] This, like many other statements found in the older accounts of Columbus's youth, rests upon no satisfactory evidence, and modern scholars are inclined to regard the whole as legendary. —[ED.]

enterprise in the direction they took. The avidity for discovery of Prince Henry's captains breathed through Perestrello's writings, and struck a note in his son-in-law's heart which had lain dormant there ever since he took to the sea as a profession, and remained latent during the years spent in fighting, and navigating waters well known to every mariner of the age. He was, as he himself tells us, always conscious of a side to his nautical vocation higher than the mere spirit of adventure which impels so many lads to go to sea.

At Porto Santo, moreover, Columbus lived on the very highway of discovery, confined at that time to following down the coast of Africa. He must have held frequent communication with those employed in the work of investigation, and his skill as a drawer of charts was probably the means of his introduction to many mariners, from whom he heard all the current tales and conjectures about land to the west. He did not believe the myths they related; but what he heard no doubt acted as fuel to the great idea which was then smouldering in his brain. He heard of strange objects cast on shore, and saw with his own eyes a piece of wood, curiously carved, which his brother-in-law Pedro Correo had met with, floating from the west. Strange things did turn up, and it was remarkable that there should have been so few, considering that tropical objects are at this present time being constantly drifted on to the exposed coasts of Ireland and Norway.

While this more practical side of the subject was forced upon him, Columbus made the question of the surface of the globe the subject of his studies. One




The Mythical Voyage of St. Brendan, Columbus's forerunner. Mass on the whale's back. (From Philoponus.)

[*To face p.* 18

of his means of livelihood was the purchasing of books and manuscripts, which he re-sold. In the interval during which they were in his possession he read them, and by their means became acquainted with the principal books on cosmology. He studied closely the *Imago Mundi* of Cardinal Aliaco, which represented the views of the ancients—Ptolemy, Aristotle, and other philosophers: and he also made himself acquainted with the works of the Arabians, Averroës and Alfraganus. It was also at this time that he read the travels of Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, whose narratives he knew almost by heart, and of the localities described by whom he had a clear picture in his brain.

"It was in Portugal," says Fernando, "that the Admiral began to surmise that if the Portuguese sailed so far south, one might also sail westward, and find land in that direction." Such is all we know of the seeds of the great idea which was to make Columbus's name so famous—the idea of reaching the eastern extremity of the Indies from the west, and of thus obtaining a short cut to Cathay and Cipango, Mangi and the famed city of Quinsai, with its hundred miles of walls, and twelve hundred bridges, and all the other regions of fabulous wealth described by Marco Polo. How long the idea may have been in a half-developed state, it is impossible to say; but in 1474 we find the first distinct revelation of his project.

This is preserved in a letter, accompanied by a small globe and descriptive sketch, which he sent to Paolo Toscanelli, a physician of Florence, who in the secret of his study had worked out the same idea as

himself.[1] Toscanelli responded joyfully to the inquiries of the Genoese mariner, supplied him with all the information in his possession, and sent him a chart designed by himself, in which he had fixed the exact position of the eastern extremity of the Indies, as also of the island of Cipango, and others, even more mythical, half-way across the Atlantic. This chart was that by which Columbus actually steered his course, though he had long before starting rejected the existence of any midway islands. Toscanelli had made out his chart in accordance with the prevailing theory of Ptolemy and the Arabian cosmologists, by which the circumference of the globe was calculated to be at least a third less than it is, and which was quite as radically wrong as to the proportions of water and land. Following this chart, Columbus expected to sight land after sailing seven hundred leagues; and perhaps, without this miscalculation, even he would not have had the courage to embark on the voyage.

Having thus found a friend in whom he could confide and with whom he could exchange ideas, Columbus began to consider the best way of putting his great project into practice; for once he had formulated it in his brain, he had no more doubts as to its feasibility than if he had already crossed the Atlantic. We know now that the northern portion of America had already been discovered, but this

[1] The authenticity of this episode has been seriously questioned in recent years, especially by de la Rosa and H. Vignaud. Without accepting the latter's demonstration as conclusive, we must own that there are solid reasons for regarding the letter attributed to Toscanelli as spurious.—[ED.]

had been the result of accident, and not of design and calculation. Columbus, on the contrary, set about his investigations, and based his certitude as to the existence of the New World on three solid foundations: 1. The nature of things. 2. The authority of learned writers. 3. The reports of navigators. It is so obvious to us that, supposing the world to be a sphere, the east could be reached from the west, that it requires an effort of the imagination to comprehend the opposition with which Columbus's theory met.

As soon as he had quite formed his ideas, Columbus went to Genoa, and made the offer to undertake, at its expense, the voyage of discovery across the Atlantic. But Genoa did not soar high enough. Her maritime energies were devoted entirely to Mediterranean trade and petty warfare; and thoughts beyond immediate success in these two were outside her range. So also was it with Venice, to which Columbus next made his offer.[1]

After the rejection of his services by both Italian republics, he for a while took no further measures, and occupied subordinate positions in various enterprises. He sailed down the African coast as far south as Guinea, and in 1477 he went to Iceland. "I have traversed the sea for twenty-three years," he wrote in the journal of his first voyage. "I have seen all in the east and in the west. I have been on the route to the north, which is by England, and I have been to Guinea." All this increased his maritime experience to a great extent, and must have removed from his

[1] Satisfactory evidence is lacking regarding these applications to Genoa and Venice.—[ED.]

mind the coasting traditions of navigation in which he had been brought up. His ideas were altogether enlarged, and probably now for the first time he followed his natural bent, and gave himself to "seeking out the secrets of nature."[1] This object always underlay such other ostensible object of his discoveries as the conversion of souls, or the extension of the dominions of Spain.

When shipwrecked in his old age on the shores of Jamaica, he reviewed his past, and in summing it up dwelt almost exclusively on his eagerness for the study of nature. "I went to sea quite young to devote myself to navigation," he then wrote, "and I have pursued it to this day. This profession leads anyone who follows it to wish to penetrate the secrets of nature. Though I am a great sinner, the compassion and mercy of our Lord, which I have always prayed for, have (covering my faults) overpowered me. It has been my sweetest consolation to seek happiness in the contemplation of the marvellous aspects of His works."[2]

After his voyages north and south, of which scant mention is made by his biographers, Columbus returned to his purpose and made the offer of his services to Portugal, the country of his adoption, and the then greatest maritime power in Europe In 1481 John II., great-nephew of Prince Henry and in a measure possessed of the same spirit as the Navigator, ascended the throne of Portugal. He marked the beginning of his reign by stirring up his sea captains

[1] Letter to Doña Juana, 1500.
[2] *Libro de las profecias.*

to further enterprise along the coast of Africa; and to him, as a fitting recipient, Columbus propounded his great idea.

John understood and entered into the startling theory, and, left to himself, might have accepted the offer, and fitted out the necessary expedition; but, to his lasting regret, he placed himself in the hands of counsellors. Two commissions in succession examined Columbus's proposal, and though two of the best cosmologists of the day, Roderico and Joseph, to whom the recent perfection of the astrolabe was attributable, sat on them, his theory was condemned as visionary, and not worth the slight expense necessary to realize it.

Still, the King could not help thinking Columbus's plan was feasible, and he returned to the charge in spite of the scientists' decision. Now, however, the conditions laid down by Columbus, from which he would not recede, and which were of the same lofty nature as those which he wrung from Spain some years later, offended John's regal dignity, and he finally refused the offer of the great Genoese. Well would it have been for him had he stopped there. In spite of his rejection of the offer, he still hankered after the possession of the possible New World, and in an evil moment for his reputation listened to and acted on a treacherous proposal to fit out an expedition on his own account, which was to act on the information freely and frankly given by Columbus.

The expedition failed, as was likely with anything so unblessed. Having lost sight of the Canaries, and encountered bad weather, those entrusted with

the enterprise lost heart, and, returning to Lisbon, declared that the whole idea was a chimera.

Columbus, the very soul of honour, could not get over this act of treachery, and, to the end of his life, refused to have any further dealings with King John.

Doña Felipa was dead, and Christopher, taking his opportunity, left Lisbon by stealth with his little son Diego, whom he took to visit his grandfather at Genoa. Thence he wended his way to Spain with the half-formed intention of offering his idea to the Catholic sovereigns of Castile and Arragon. He felt it fitting that they whom he called the "most exalted monarchs in Christendom, and who exercised so great an influence over the Christian faith and its advancement,"[1] should have the chance of furthering a plan which would, he hoped, be fraught with so much glory to God and His Church.

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.

## CHAPTER II

### WAITING ON PRINCES

### 1485–1492

HAVING made choice of the Spanish sovereigns as the next recipients of his offer, Providence directed Columbus's steps to the little port of Palos in the south of Spain, where he landed on the 13th of July 1485. The reason of this choice of locality was its vicinity to Huelva, where lived his wife's sister, with whom he intended to leave his little son. Needing refreshment for himself and the child, he turned aside from his road and scaled the height on which stood the Franciscan Convent of La Rabida. Probably he already possessed that affection for the sons of St. Francis which was such a marked feature in his life, and he preferred to go out of his way to receive as an alms at their convent what he might have obtained at any wayside hostel. This act of devotion gained for him a friend who contributed in no small degree to the success of his project.

Juan Perez de Marchena, the Father Guardian of La Rabida, was a man in every way remarkable. At one time he had lived at the Court as confessor to Queen Isabella; but his love of his vocation and his

desire for solitude and study had pleaded for him, and obtained his release from a thraldom which was very irksome, with the permission to retire to La Rabida. There he dwelt, uniting to his religious duties a deep and practical study of astronomy and cosmology ;[1] and in the silence of the cloister he arrived at views about the surface of our globe closely akin to those held by Columbus and Toscanelli.

Having given a welcome to the weary, and evidently needy, traveller and his child, he invited the confidence of Columbus in such a way as to induce the latter to expose his great idea to him ; and, as he listened, the friar believed in the possibility of its execution as firmly as did his guest. The kind-hearted invitation to the traveller to step in and rest led to his residence in the convent for nearly a year. During this time Columbus, casting away anxiety, devoted himself to the things of his soul ; and it was probably then that he was enrolled as a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, in the habit of which it was his delight to vest himself in all times of trouble and emergency. Columbus did not only pray during his sojourn at La Rabida, but he studied also. The library of the Franciscan friars was chiefly theological, and from it he obtained no mean Scriptural and patristic knowledge. It was owing to his researches among its shelves that he was able to present such a bold front to the members of the Commission of Salamanca.

[1] There is much reason to doubt the identity of the Franciscan Juan Perez with the scholar Perez who devoted himself to astronomical studies. See the *Boletin de la Real Accademia de la Historia*, vol. xx. p. 30.—[Ed.]

Columbus had indeed found a friend and warm partizan; but who were he and Father Juan, men equally poor, to undertake the discovery of a new world? Yet to Marchena he owed his introduction to the Spanish Court, which eventually led to the accomplishment of his enterprise. The friar knew few people at present about the Court, and all he could do was, having undertaken the care and education of little Diego, to send his friend to the Court at Cordova with a letter of introduction to Fernando Talavera, the Hieronymite prior of Prado, who had succeeded him as confessor to the Queen, and followed the Court wherever it moved. Marchena hoped that this would be a sure means of obtaining for Columbus an audience with the sovereigns, but apparently he made a mistake in his choice of a patron.[1] Talavera was a good man, and led the life of a religious while at Court, but unfortunately he had made no study of science, and as soon as Columbus attempted to explain his theory, condemned it as chimerical without further inquiry, and proclaimed its author to be a fanatic, if not an impostor. Columbus, rebuffed, and no further advanced than before towards his end, returned for a while into privacy and led a life much like that which he had led at Lisbon, supporting himself by making charts, and by purchasing and retailing books.

While leading this life at Cordova he met and married Beatrice Enriquez, a young and beautiful girl of noble family, the mother of his younger son

[1] It must be recognized that all these details, though repeated by one biographer after another until quite recent times, must now be regarded as doubtful.—[ED.]

Fernando, who has made his own name famous as the biographer of his father. Too little is known of this second marriage;[1] but the fact that Beatrice, young, beautiful, and noble, should have married a man twice her own age, poor, travel-worn, and prematurely grey, with nothing to recommend him to such a bride except that he was what the whole world now knows him to have been, gives an element of romance to the marriage and sets Beatrice on a pinnacle.

Her name is never heard of except at Cordova, and whether she ever joined her husband during his later sojourn in other parts of Spain is a matter of mere surmise. She survived him, for before he died Columbus commended her to the care of his son Diego, and the terms in which he did so, "for the discharge of his conscience, for it weighed heavy on his soul," give the impression that he reproached himself for having unduly deserted her at the call of duty, and for the realization of his great idea. One of his pleas for consideration at the hands of the sovereigns, after he had lost their favour and had been sent to Spain in chains, was that he had abandoned wife and children in their service.[2] Probably as the carrying

[1] Despite the arguments of M. Roselly de Lorgues, it seems, unfortunately, almost certain that no marriage took place between Columbus and the mother of his son, Fernando. This is the view not only of critics like M. Harrisse and Justin Winsor, but also of earnest Catholics, such as Tarducci. It must be remembered that in that age of passion and licence, lapses against the moral law were frequent even on the part of men of high spiritual ideals, who afterwards did bitter penance for their infirmity of purpose.—[ED.]

[2] Letter to the Members of the Council, A.D. 1500.

out of his idea assumed more and more the aspect of a divine vocation, he became more and more detached from human ties, and most likely this woman, whose name comes into his biography like a passing gleam of sunshine, shared in his detachment.

For two years Columbus lived in the shadow of the Court at Cordova without being able to do anything to further his ends, or even obtain an audience with the sovereigns. Once, without waiting for presentation, and discarding all formalities, he wrote a straightforward letter to Ferdinand of Aragon, expounding his ideas; but to this letter he received no answer. Still, he lived in hope, trusting to God to bring his idea to fruition; nor did he trust in vain. Though Talavera treated him as an adventurer, there were two men about Court, Alonzo de Quintanilla, comptroller, and Luis de Santangel, treasurer, who had been deeply impressed by the very words which Talavera had treated so scornfully. Though they could not do much directly towards furthering his end, they did what they could, and in 1487 Quintanilla obtained an audience for him with Mendoza, the Cardinal of Spain. At first the Cardinal, startled by the boldness of the project, was suspicious; but, as he heard more, his great mind grasped the subject, and he was convinced that not only might the plan be feasible, but also of the utmost importance to Spain. With this in view he obtained an audience for Columbus with the sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella.

The King, true to his nature, was cautious, though too acute on the subject of his interests to reject the offer of the Genoese unconditionally. Isabella, on the

contrary, was struck both by the idea and the man, and the result of the interview and the opportunity it gave him of expounding the great idea was the appointment of a Commission to examine the project. The Court was at that time at Salamanca, and in that city of learning the Commission was formed. Unfortunately, this duty was entrusted to Talavera, and his choice of its members was bad. There was a vast preponderance of theologians over scientists, and, even among the few of the latter who sat on it, the names of the best-known cosmologists, such as Ferrer and de la Cosa, were absent.

In spite of the progress which had been made in science by the end of the fifteenth century, the members of this Commission were in the most benighted state of ignorance. Many of them clung to the idea that the earth was a sloping plane; others that it was a flattened disc. Those who admitted that our world is spherical, maintained that south of the equator there was a gulf of emptiness. Some practical-minded objectors laughed at the idea of a globe, on the plea that in the antipodes men would walk head downwards, and plants would grow root upwards; and those who did admit its spherical form asked scornfully how, once Columbus had sailed downwards towards the west, he proposed to climb upwards on his return. To the most enlightened the ocean west of the Azores was what they called the Mare Tenebrosum, full of darkness, monsters, and unknown horrors, out of which no man could escape alive. Columbus met all the arguments; but he spoke with caution, for he had learnt a lesson at the Portuguese

Court, and was careful how he confided his secrets to unscrupulous men.

The Commission had not sat many months before the Court left Salamanca; and as Talavera and several courtiers were on it, it had to adjourn early in 1488, and, as a matter of fact, was not resumed till more than two years later. Columbus, with his wonderful patience and belief in the mission entrusted to him, waited God's time, and rejected favourable overtures from Portugal and England. He was so full of honour that until Spain explicitly rejected his offer, he would listen to no one else. Meanwhile, he seemed to be forgotten by the sovereigns, save that he was at intervals paid a stipend, promised to him for such time as his cause was pending.

While at Salamanca, Columbus lived with the Dominicans at St. Stephen's, and among them found friends only second in value to the Franciscans. Diego de Deza, the prior, who was also a member of the Commission, believed in the Genoese and his idea, and manfully fought his battles. Eight years later Columbus bears testimony to the support afforded to him by Fra Diego. "All others," he wrote, "who thought of the matter or heard it spoken of, unanimously treated it with contempt, with the exception of two friars who always remained constant in their belief in its practicability."[1] These two friars were Father Deza and Father Marchena.

His patience was indeed sorely tried. For seven years, as he says, he was "torn with disputes, and, in a word, his proposition a thing for mockery." The

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.

crusade against the Moors took up the whole attention of the sovereigns, and what leisure of mind was left them was absorbed in the arrangements for the marriages of their son and daughters. Columbus followed the Court about in its wanderings, and even took an active share in some of the battles. At Bara, in 1489, he met some religious who had just returned from the Holy Land. To his acquaintance with them can be traced an additional motive in his ardour for discovery. Not only did he want to lay bare the secrets of nature, and, still more, gather into the Church a rich harvest of souls; but he held, in addition, the hope that could he but discover the fabulous riches of the Indies, he might defray the expenses of a crusade for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the infidel. This, the source of many a disappointment, was the dream of his life, the accomplishment of which he bequeathed to his heirs.

The religious war dragged on, and when at last the sovereigns embarked on the campaign of Grenada, Columbus knew that to wait for his answer till that was over would be to wait indefinitely. So he pressed for a decision on the part of the Commission, which, by Isabella's orders, resumed its sittings early in 1491. Still obstinate in their ignorance, the members quoted Scripture to disprove Columbus's theory; but he met them passage for passage. Then they sought to overwhelm him with quotations from the fathers, but he, thanks to his studies at La Rabida, was equally able to fight them on this ground. Provoked by his arguments, some members sought to obtain the Inquisition's condemnation of his theory; but Diego

de Deza stood his friend, and successfully cleared him from the charge of heterodoxy.

However, with such a Commission the condemnation of his theory was almost a foregone conclusion; and the verdict was pronounced that "the project rested on a false basis, since the author asserted as a truth what was an impossibility." Such was the decision, which Columbus took as a final dismissal, in spite of Isabella's kind-hearted, though vague, assurance that his proposal should be considered at some future time.

So anxious was Columbus that Catholic Spain should have the benefit of his future discovery, that, after his dismissal by the sovereigns, he made his offer to their greatest subject, the Duke of Medina Celi. The Duke's mind was quite open to the force of Columbus's arguments, and he would gladly have fitted out an expedition such as was required, had he not feared the sovereigns' displeasure. They might reject the offer themselves, but they would not brook its acceptance by one of their subjects. So, having made this final and vain attempt, Columbus determined to leave Spain altogether and offer his services to France, or, as some biographers say, to England. As he went through the towns and villages he was looked on as a madman, and children significantly put their hands to their foreheads as he passed by.

Before leaving Spain, he had to go to La Rabida to fetch his young son. Once more Father Marchena proved himself to be Columbus's friend, and secured possession of the New World for his native country. When, after six years spent in disappointment and vain application, his friend returned to him, broken

and aged by hope deferred, the friar's soul burnt within him with sorrowful indignation. He believed so intensely in the certain success of Columbus's project, that it was intolerable to him that it should be lost to Spain, and, perhaps, to the world. He knew his own influence with Isabella, and, having taken Garcia Hernandez, a physician and man of science, into his confidence, he determined to try the effect of a personal interview with her. Having borrowed a mule, he rode off without delay to Santa Fè, a mushroom city built for belligerent purposes, where the sovereigns were then holding court, and with fervid eloquence explained to the Queen what it was which she had allowed to be so lightly rejected. The good friar prevailed, and Isabella sent for Columbus and promised him faithfully that she would attend to him and his project as soon as Grenada had fallen. With this Columbus and nis friend had to be content, though, as it turned out, their patience was to be taxed for but a little longer.

Grenada fell on the 2nd of January 1492, and, true to her promise, Isabella sent for Columbus, who was on the spot, and had with his own eyes beheld Bobadil come forth and do homage to the Christian sovereigns. For seven long weary years had he waited, sick at heart with the disappointment of hope deferred; but no sense of sudden relief, or the sure hope of the realization of his dream, would make him give his secret for less than its worth. He knew the greatness of the gift he was offering to Spain, and he laid down firmly and precisely the conditions on which he would give it—conditions which had already caused his re-

Columbus taking leave of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. (From De Bry.)

jection by Portugal. He demanded for himself the appointment of High Admiral of the Ocean, Viceroy over all lands discovered, with almost unlimited authority therein, and, finally, a tenth of all proceeds. Such were the claims of a man who was to all intents and purposes a beggar, dependent for subsistence on the charity of others.

The arrangement of terms had been left by the Queen to Talavera, recently raised to the See of Avila, and he scornfully urged her to reject these demands. But not one jot would Columbus abate, his only concession being the offer to bear the eighth part of the expense himself. It was not his own rights, as an individual, about which he held out ; it was the rights of one singled out and commissioned by God to make known the secrets of the earth. His terms were rejected, and, having no more to say, he turned his back on those to whom he had vainly offered a new world ; and this time he was resolved that his departure should be final.

Spain, however, was to have one more chance. Quintanilla and Santangel, with faith in Columbus's idea equal in intensity to his own, were at the Court. When they heard that, after all, his offer had been rejected, they made their way into the Queen's presence, and, casting etiquette to the winds, vehemently showed her what it was that she had thrown away. Meanwhile, Father Marchena, who had gone to Grenada to be near his friend at this crisis of his life, knelt before the Blessed Sacrament in the Queen's private chapel, and implored God to avert the catastrophe. His prayers and the vehemence of his friends prevailed.

Isabella's eyes were suddenly opened to see the great idea, as with the eyes of those who believed in it. There and then she pledged herself to equip and support an expedition of discovery from the revenues of Castile, even if she had to sell her jewels to raise the money.

A messenger was sent hot haste to fetch Columbus. Thoughtful, sad, and indignant, he had ridden on his mule as far as the Bridge of Pinos; and the proverbial straw which broke the camel's back had been laid upon him. His patience was exhausted, and it was long before he could be persuaded to return, and, as he feared, expose himself to further rebuffs. Fortunately, his noble spirit of forgiveness won the day, and he returned. In an interview with the sovereigns all his claims were agreed to, and all necessary expenditure promised. Then, in the exultation of his heart, he poured forth his aims and his hopes of what was to be. He spoke fervently about the conversion of the Indies, the grace of baptism to be given to a people who had asked for it two centuries previously, and last, not least, he confided to Ferdinand and Isabella his dream about a crusade for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre, to be paid for by the riches he was going forth to unearth. When he spoke of this hope the sovereigns smiled, and said that even without his discoveries they would be well disposed to such an object.[1]

Unfortunately, Columbus's trouble and the obstacles in the way of the enterprise were not at an end with the sanction and co-operation of the sovereigns. In

[1] *Journal*, 26th December 1492.

one sense the more practical difficulties had but begun. From motives of economy the Queen had chosen the port of Palos to supply the caravels and crews required by Columbus, as, for some past misdemeanour, this port lay under a punitive tribute, and was bound to supply a certain number of vessels gratis for the royal use. This sentence had never called forth any resistance hitherto; but when it became known that the vessels were required for no ordinary expedition, but to sail across the sea of darkness, there was a general panic, which, for a time, threatened destruction to the explorer's hopes. It required the arbitrary intervention of the Queen's envoy to raise even one caravel; and he only succeeded in this by forcibly seizing the *Pinta*, owned by two citizens, who were compelled by threats to fit her out, which they did, but so unwillingly and so badly as to cause much future trouble to the Admiral.

Probably the difficulties of providing ships would never have been surmounted had not the three brothers Pinzon, shipowners at Palos, adopted Columbus's views and furnished for the expedition a little caravel, the *Nina*, and volunteered to accompany him on the voyage. Encouraged by this, Juan de la Cosa offered another, larger vessel, the *Gallega*, which, though clumsy, was accepted and re-christened the *Santa Maria*; and with this addition the little fleet was ready to sail with the first favourable wind.

All was ready. The future of Diego the boy was provided for, as the Queen had appointed him page to Prince Juan, and he had already been taken to Cordova to live under the care of his step-mother,

to be brought up with his young half-brother Fernando. The explorer's honours had been granted, conditionally upon his success ; and the documents conferring them were in his possession. He was, moreover, provided with an open letter addressed to any sovereign at whose court he might present himself beyond the seas. Other important affairs of a spiritual nature were likewise settled, and Columbus, the Pinzons, and the hundred and twenty men who were to accompany them, approached the sacraments, and made a General Communion at La Rabida. Thus all was ready save the wind, which obstinately blew from the west.

## CHAPTER III

### DISCOVERY

### 1492

On the 3rd of August, when Columbus, who was staying till the last moment at La Rabida, rose from sleep in the grey hour of early dawn, he perceived that the wind had shifted to the east. Rousing Father Juan, according to pre-arrangement, he heard Mass and received Holy Communion—a veritable Viaticum—and then hastened on board the *Santa Maria.* While the day was still young the three little vessels glided into the open sea, followed by the wails and tears of those on shore, who thought their sons and brothers were going to certain death.

In the museum at Seville there is a chart reputed by tradition to have been drawn by Columbus himself; and in a corner is a picture of the three caravels, depicted by the same hand. The *Santa Maria,* clumsy but strongly built, was decked fore and aft; but the *Pinta* and *Nina* were decked only on forecastle and poop, and were otherwise mere open boats of seventy and fifty tons' burden respectively. How such vessels escaped swamping in the terrific storms to which they were exposed must always be a matter

of surprise, and must excite our admiration for the proficiency in their art possessed by the shipbuilders of the fifteenth century.

Columbus flew his flag, or rather standard—which consisted of a representation of the Crucifixion—on the *Santa Maria*. The two smaller vessels, commanded respectively by Martin and Vincent Pinzon, carried a green flag with the sovereigns' initials. The Admiral's standard was significant of the solemn intention by which he placed this first voyage under the protection of the Divine Redeemer. Our Lord's acceptance of the offering seems to be indicated by the special favours received by Columbus on Friday. It was on that day that the wind changed and the little fleet sailed, and equally on that day that the Admiral returned safely to Palos. Above all, it was on a Friday that the first land in the west was reached, justly named San Salvador after Him in Whose honour the expedition was made.

As soon as the vessels were fairly under way, Columbus retired to his cabin and, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," began a journal, which he kept with the utmost regularity for the benefit of the sovereigns. "I have resolved," he says in its exordium,[1] "to describe each night what passed in the day, and note each day how I navigated at night. I propose to construct a chart for navigating, on which I shall delineate all the seas and lands of the ocean, placed in their proper position, under their right bearings. Further, I propose to prepare a book, and put down all, as it were in a picture, by latitude from

[1] *Journal of Columbus*, Hakluyt Society.

the equator, and western longitude. I shall have accomplished much, for I shall forget sleep, and shall work at the business of navigation, so that the service may be performed ; all which will entail great labour." This journal was sent to Ferdinand and Isabella for their perusal, but has shared the fate of most of the Admiral's other writings, and is now lost to the world. Las Casas made use of it, and fortunately made an epitome of it with several verbal quotations. Fernando also used the original when writing the life of his father. The journal, as it now exists in abridged form, contains the minutest daily details of the voyage, of which only the baldest abstract can be given here.

On the 6th of September the adventurers lost sight of the Canaries and all that bound them to the known world ; and it is recorded that, as the most western of the group sank below the horizon, the mariners wept. However, the Mare Tenebrosum turned out to have but few real terrors, and behaved more like a lamb than a lion, though the fears of the adventurers created terrors where none existed. The gentle, steady easterly breeze which bore them on their course terrified them, for they feared that the wind never blew from the west in these parts, and that they could never return home. So, when a westerly breeze did spring up, though it impeded the ship, Columbus regarded it as a special token of God's protection, and returned thanks to Him in his journal, as he did on every occasion for gratitude. The vast piles of seaweed, covering more than three times the area of Spain, terrified them and caused some anxiety to Columbus, till he saw how the vessels made their way

through it. The greatest alarm was caused by the variation of the compass, perceived on the 13th of September. However, Columbus explained it on scientific grounds, which satisfied both himself and his companions.

The great discoverer had fixed ideas. He had made up his mind that Cipango lay seven hundred leagues due west of the Canaries, and was resolved to steer his course accordingly, refusing to turn from it for anything or anybody. Knowing, however, the timidity of his followers, he kept two reckonings, lest their knowledge of their great distance from known countries should appal them. Land birds flew by and fragments of land vegetables were met with, but Columbus refused to change his course in search of smaller islands, which might interfere with his one end. "He considered it certain," says Las Casas' epitome of the journal, "that there were islands both to north and south. But his desire was to press onwards to the Indies, the weather being fine. On his return, God willing, he could see all." By the 1st of October they had traversed the appointed seven hundred leagues, and then Columbus changed his course slightly to the southward. But it was twelve days more before the desired land was reached.

From the first the spirit of his followers had been antagonistic to him; and he had scarcely lost sight of land before he encountered that opposition and thwarting of his dearest plans and hopes which were to meet him in one form or the other until death set him free from the fret. Even at starting, whenever weary nature compelled him to sleep, he found on returning

to deck that either from carelessness or obstinacy the course had been altered. But before a month was over a general spirit of distrust in, and almost detestation of, their leader prevailed among the three crews, which gradually extended itself to the officers, and even to the Pinzons. His firmness in refusing to deviate from his course, added to the sickness of hope deferred caused by constant false reports of land in sight, fomented the mutinous spirit. Fernando says that the crews had well-nigh made up their minds to throw the Admiral overboard and return to Spain, attributing his death to accident. On 10th October, matters reached a climax. Profiting by a calm, the three crews communicated with each other, and Martin Pinzo threatened Columbus with death if he did not turn back. The Admiral never lost his gentle spirit of calmness, and, as the journal says, tried to encourage the men in the best way he could; and added that, however they might complain, he "had to go to the Indies, and would go on until, by the help of God, he found them."

He was but one man against a hundred and nineteen, but to the end of the voyage his spirit of ascendency kept the turbulent spirits in check. His great charity fettered his pen, and among all the minutiæ detailed in his journal, he makes no mention of the more dangerous developments of the spirit of mutiny; and it is only from other writers that we know of it. What would have happened had there been storms and contrary winds to contend against, such as he met with on his return voyage, it is impossible to say. A fervent entry in his journal on the 2nd of

October: "The sea still good, much thanks to God," shows how much such eventualities were in his mind.

On the evening of the 11th of October, after the Salve which was always sung by the crews at sunset, Columbus addressed his followers, and, having pointed out the goodness shown to them by God during the voyage, predicted that they were now close to land. That something which was a mixture of intuition based on his shrewd observation of nature, and tranquil attention to the interior voice of God—a mixture which was at times like an inspired instinct—told him that the end was nearly attained. All that night he walked the deck, peering into the darkness, until he perceived a flickering light low down on the horizon, which convinced him that land was near. At dawn a seaman on board the *Pinta*, which was the fastest of the three caravels, saw the actual land. Then, throwing themselves on their knees, the united crews sang the Te Deum.

Perhaps that was the moment of most unmixed joy in Columbus's whole life; for the triumph which attended his first return to Spain had something of worldliness about it, which must have acted as alloy to the gold. Now, after all those years of waiting and disappointment, his words had come true; and the reality of his vocation as God's envoy was proved to himself and all the world, so that eight years later, though in fetters and at the lowest ebb of his fortunes, he could say with the most intense conviction: "God made me the herald of a new heaven and a new earth, and he showed me the spot where to find it."[1]

[1] Letter to Doña Juana, 1500.

Columbus's Three Caravels.

[*To face p.* 44.

The land sighted proved to be an island, to which Columbus at once gave the name of San Salvador, and which is now generally supposed to be what is known as Watling Island. He landed at daylight, clad in armour and scarlet doublet, to plant a cross, and take solemn possession of it in the name of the Catholic sovereigns of Spain. But the moment he set foot on shore he fell on his knees, kissed the ground three times, and burst into tears. Twice Columbus's tears are recorded, and we know not which occasion is the more moving—whether now, when they were shed as the expression of pure, unalloyed happiness, or when, years after, they were shed in the hour of his abasement, and Isabella's shame and compassion for his humiliation drew the tears from him which no sufferings of his own had called forth.

Kneeling at the foot of a rough cross, he uttered this prayer : " Lord God, Eternal and Almighty, Who by Thy word hast created the firmament, the earth, and the sea, may Thy Name be everywhere blessed and glorified. May Thy divine Majesty be exalted in this new part of the world, where Thou hast permitted Thy servant to be the means of making Thy Name known and preached." Those of his companions who had from the first detested him and his mission, and who had latterly even thirsted for his blood, were now moved to more generous feelings, and, crowding round him, implored his forgiveness for the distrust they had shown. He had no more difficulty in forgiving these, his first opponents, than he had in the case of the worse offenders of later years.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN EARTHLY PARADISE

### 1492

At San Salvador the Spaniards first came into touch with the natives, or the Indians, as Columbus, under the misapprehension that he had discovered the eastern extremity of the Indies, called them. With our knowledge of after events, a sense of gloom creeps over the mind on being introduced to these innocent, childlike creatures, in whom Columbus delighted, and in whom, full of admiration for their natural virtues, he saw souls ripe for conversion. They seemed to have no vices. Their "customs were good," and their honesty was scrupulous. "They are a loving, uncovetous people," he wrote in his journal, "and so docile in all things that I believe in all the world there is not a better people nor a better country. They love their neighbour as themselves, and they have the sweetest and gentlest way of talking in the world, and always with a smile."—"The people know not what is evil," he says in another passage of his journal.

Their generosity was something wonderful. "They are guileless," he wrote to Santangel, when giving an

account of his first voyage, "and so liberal of all they have that no one would believe it who had not seen it. They never refuse anything that they possess when it is asked of them. On the contrary, they offer it themselves; and they exhibit so much loving-kindness that they would even give their hearts."

These simple creatures were by no means without a form of government, the efficaciousness of which, and the respect for authority it called forth, delighted Columbus. The caciques ruled despotically over their little domains, being, in their turn, with something akin to the feudal system, responsible towards greater caciques. The rule was autocratic but paternal, and the devotion of the people to their sovereigns was unbounded. "The villages are very pretty," the Admiral writes. "Each has a chief who acts as a judge and who is obeyed by them. All these lords use but few words and have excellent manners. Most of their orders are given by a sign, which is understood with surprising quickness." For all their timidity the intelligence of the natives was remarkable, and under happier circumstances could have been turned to good account. So thought Columbus, and with the least conceivable delay he tried the experiment of kidnapping about half a dozen of the natives of San Salvador, in order to educate them for the future benefit of their fellow-countrymen, and, as we may gather from the Admiral's words, at the cost of but small repugnance on their part. "On my reaching the Indies," he writes to Santangel, "I took by force in the first island I discovered some of these natives, that they might learn our language and give me information. . . . They soon

understood us, and we them, and they have been very serviceable to us. . . . I find they still believe that I come from heaven. They were the first to say this wherever I went, . . . crying with a loud voice, 'Come, come and see the people from heaven.'"[1] Heaven meant a great deal to the childlike West Indians, and all good and beautiful things in their opinion came thence. They had no very definite worship of their own, and were soon attracted by the sight of the worship of the Christians, and tried in their own way to take part in it. "They repeat the Salve and Ave with their hands raised to heaven," writes Columbus with delight, "and make the sign of the cross."

It was the conviction that the Spaniards came from heaven, and their superiority to themselves, which attracted them to Christianity; and the knowledge of this filled the Admiral with a great sense of responsibility, and a wish that his companions should be prompted in their actions by a desire to seem perfect in the eyes of the Indians. He inculcated absolute morality and integrity in all their dealings with the natives, and during that first voyage he had his way.

But he looked beyond the first voyage, and sought to legislate for future contact with the natives. He impressed his views on the sovereigns with an almost prophetic dread of the worldly missionaries who might be sent out. "Your Highnesses ought not to consent to anyone putting foot in the country except Catholic Christians; for the increase and exaltation of the Christian religion was the beginning and end of the

[1] Select Letters, Hakluyt Society.

undertaking. No one should come to these parts who is not a good Christian."

Columbus's end was gained, and the New World lay before him; and in the first moment of his joy and triumph he hastened to remind the sovereigns of Spain that the primary object of the enterprise was the conversion of the inhabitants of the lands which he had been the means of making known. The simple way in which the natives seemed to welcome the faith, added keenness to his desire for their baptism. "If devout religious are sent," he says, "men who know the language, they will soon be all Christians. I trust your Highnesses will see to this with all possible diligence, and will hasten to convert these many people and bring them within the Church."

Such was the dream of Columbus's life—a dream the realization of which seemed to him probable in these golden days of hope, before disillusionment had clouded his sky. Nor was he over-sanguine in his expectations, for, had he had his way, and been free to exercise his ascendency over the childlike people and utilize their confidence in him in his own way, they would very likely have been fulfilled. He is accused of initiating that slavery which was such a curse to the New World, and—whatever his motive—there is no denying that he did drive in the thin end of the wedge by his system of kidnapping natives to take to Spain. Nor is it only posterity which has condemned him on this score, for Las Casas, his quasi-contemporary, says, that by such acts alone he merited all the misfortunes he had to endure. It would be hard for anyone, however great an admirer

of Columbus, to deny that from a modern point of view he did take unwarrantable liberties with the persons of the West Indian natives.

But with him all this was a means to an end—namely, the salvation of souls. Those among the friendly natives whom he kidnapped were to be retained till they could be taught, and sent forth as messengers of grace to their fellow-countrymen. They were not in a condition to exercise their own free will, so he chose what he considered the better part for them. As for the Caribs, he regarded slavery among Christian masters as the only means of removing them from their brutish cannibal customs, and bringing them to better ways. He had his ideal, and though his way of realizing it may be condemned, thrice blessed for all eternity would it have been for those natives could he have carried it out as he planned it.

The end of Columbus's first voyage was far from being accomplished by the discovery of land, and he soon proceeded further. In his letter to Santangel he thus summarizes his subsequent movements and researches: "To the first island that I found I gave the name of San Salvador, in remembrance of the High Majesty who has marvellously brought all these things to pass. To the second I gave the name of Sta. Maria de Concepcion [now Long Island]; the third I called Fernandina [Great Exuma]; the fourth Isabella [Crooked Island]; and the fifth Juana [Cuba]." He remained for almost six weeks coasting backwards and forwards along this last island, trying to circumnavigate it, but, baffled by contrary winds,

he was prevented from finding out whether it were an island, or *terra firma*. While beating backwards and forwards, Martin Pinzon, who, ever since the mutiny of October had defied and thwarted him, and "done and said many other things to him," now parted company, led away by the hope of securing some gold, of which the natives informed him.

At first Columbus thought Cuba must be Cipango, being misled by its size, and the similarity of some of the native names for localities mentioned by Marco Polo and Mandeville. Had he been less humble, and bolder in his incredulity of ancient writings and modern lights, such as Toscanelli, Behaim, and Aliaco, he might have discovered more. As it was, his faith in others hampered him, and he spent time unnecessarily in searching for Cipango in the latitude and longitude given to it by Toscanelli. He even sent an Arabic interpreter into the interior, who, naturally, failed to find any trace of either Oriental life or language. On the strength of this failure, and, moreover, finding no trace of gold, Columbus gave up the quest, and, following the indications of the natives, he sailed eastward. On 6th December he arrived off an island which he christened Hispaniola—a name mixed up with the saddest parts of his life, and the thoughts of which hung like a black pall over his last days.

But no cloud overshadowed his joy yet. "It pleased the Lord," he says, "to show him one thing better than the other," and, as he passed from island to island, each one more beautiful than the last, his life was like a dream of delight. He had a keen eye

for the beauties of nature, and his journal is full of exclamations about the exquisite scenery and vegetation. "I walk among the trees," he writes on 21st October, "which are the most beautiful I have ever seen. I can never tire my eyes in looking at such loveliness. The songs of the birds are so pleasant that it seems as if a man could never wish to leave the place." He had, in fact, he says, to put restraint on himself, and not land too often from his vessel, lest he should be tempted to linger over-long and waste time. The only drawback to his perfect content was his ignorance of the botany of the country. "There are trees of a thousand sorts," he writes, "and I feel the most unhappy man in the world because I do not know about them."

It was indeed an earthly paradise, with its innocent, kindly inhabitants, and its useful and pleasant products, such as cotton, potatoes, yams, to say nothing of tobacco, the use of which was soon adopted by the Spaniards; and an earthly paradise it might have remained but for the treasures of gold concealed beneath its soil. Columbus spoilt all by his hungry search for gold, even though his avidity did not proceed from any desire to amass wealth for himself. Far from it. In the dim future there loomed his dream of a crusade for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, to be defrayed by the produce of his discoveries. Gold must be had for the crusade; and so far the thirst for treasure entered into the holy and heroic object of the expedition. But there was another motive, forced on Columbus against his better judgement, which cast a blight over all his discoveries.

For seven years had he vainly pleaded with a niggardly state for means to carry out his great idea; and when at last his petition was granted, he knew but too well that the only motive for the concession was the hope of wealth. "It was necessary," he says with covert irony, after reminding the sovereigns how persistently he had urged the conversion of the natives as the primary aim of his discoveries—"it was necessary to refer to the hopes of temporal prosperity held out by learned and trustworthy writers, who told of the great riches which were to be found in those parts."[1]

Columbus was a poor man, too poor, alas! to be free to carry out his idea in his own way. He had to carry it out in the mean way of his employers, or not at all. Gold they asked for, and gold he knew they must have, or farewell to all future assistance. So necessary to his plans did he consider the precious metal that he felt confident in God's help towards finding it. "May our Lord favour me in His clemency," he writes, "that I may find this gold—I mean the mine where it comes from." Had it not been for the gold mines of Cibao, Veragua, and other parts, the Indians of the New World might have received the Gospel as good news of great joy, and the story of Hispaniola and the other fair lands of the west would not have been as a blot on the page of history.

Some of the natives of San Salvador who came to stare at the white visitants wore small pieces of gold in their nostrils; and from the moment this was seen

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.

by the Spaniards, the quantity of gold ornaments and the facility for barter governed the movements of the expedition. Often and often were the discoverers turned from their actual object by rumours of gold. No doubt the natives, who were quick to perceive the surest way to the white men's favour, romanced a good deal about the places where gold was to be found; and it is to be remarked that they always described it as being found in some land which they designated with a vagueness which leads us to suspect that their object was to make the strangers remove themselves elsewhere. However vague the designation, Columbus followed it, going from one place to the other seeking for what eluded his grasp like a will-of-the-wisp. He himself indeed clung to his purer and greater ends, but from the moment that gold was seen he stood alone, and the rest of his life was one long, vain effort to stem the tide of avarice and all the black sins which followed in its train.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RETURN HOME

### 1493

AFTER the discovery of Hispaniola, Columbus meant to pass on and make new investigations; but Providence decreed otherwise. As far as was possible for human nature, he carried out the intention announced in his journal, of doing without sleep in the accomplishment of his great work. However, on the night of the 24th December, having been sixty hours on deck, coasting along the north of the island, he was quite worn out; and, the sea being calm and the weather clear, he lay down for a few hours, leaving the *Santa Maria* in charge of his pilot, as the second in command was styled. But he too went below, with the result that the vessel, contrary to explicit orders, was left with a young lad at the helm. The boy, through carelessness or ignorance, let the caravel drift on to a reef, where she was soon a hopeless wreck.

Guacanagari, the cacique of Marien, the north-western portion of the island, where the disaster occurred, had already shown kindness and hospitality towards the Spaniards; and the present misfortune of the heaven-sent strangers appealed to the nobility

of his soul. He shed tears of pity, and in his simple way tried to make amends to Columbus for his loss by offering him all he possessed. He helped the seamen to get the cargo and everything of value out of the wreck, and stored it for him. Neither he nor any of his untaught, naked subjects touched a single object, however trifling or enticing. This episode in the intercourse between Spaniard and savage proves how right Columbus was in his estimate of the Indians' character, and what worthy citizens of the world they might have become under different treatment.

The crew of the *Santa Maria* adapted themselves readily to circumstances, and led a sylvan life in the beautiful island, as innocent as that of their dusky hosts. When Columbus saw this, and perceived the care that the Indians took of their visitors, the idea occurred to him of building a fort from the remains of the wreck, there to leave some forty men, while he returned to Spain in the *Nina*—the only vessel left to him—to take back the news of the discovery of the New World. Guacanagari was delighted with the idea, and the signal honour which he thought it conferred upon him. His devotion to Columbus was very striking, and never wavered under the treatment it drew down on him from his fellow natives, or the suspicion in which he was held by the Spaniards. "I have established the greatest friendship with the king of that country," wrote the Admiral to Santangel, while describing the settlement of La Navidad, as he called the fort in honour of the day on which he was wrecked. "So much is this the case that he took pride in calling me his brother and treating me as such."

The fort being finished, Columbus garrisoned it with forty men under command of Diego de Arana, a man whom he could trust, and gave them strict injunctions to avoid licentiousness and any offence likely to irritate the natives. Then he bade farewell to the beautiful spot and sailed for Spain. Soon after the *Nina* started she was rejoined by the *Pinta*, the direction of the wind effecting a meeting which the commander of the latter would have gladly avoided. Martin Pinzon pleaded stress of weather as the cause of his separation from the Admiral; but Columbus knew better, having authentic information that he and his comrades had passed the interval in trading for gold with the natives. "He could not understand," he writes in his journal, "whence came the insolence and disloyalty with which Pinzon treated him." Well was it for him then that such a thing could surprise him. The time came when treachery and disloyalty worse than Pinzon's were so habitual that it was rather an occasion of surprise when his followers were true to him.

From henceforth he silently distrusted the man, and could not bear to have any dealings with him, and wished, as he said, "to get home as soon as possible to get rid of the evil company that was with him." Strong, however, as was the aversion, he dissembled, for he did not wish to alienate his captain further, as he required the company of the *Pinta* on his return voyage, not for his own sake, but on account of his great work. The *Nina* was but a fragile little craft, and the idea of the tidings of his discovery being bound up with the safety of this one vessel frightened

him. Though he thus dissembled for expediency's sake, and always scorned to resent any personal slight, he asserted himself and authority where justice was at stake, and, at the cost of much insolence, insisted on Pinzon restoring to their homes some natives, male and female, whom he had kidnapped to sell in Spain.

The two vessels sailed along the northern coast of Hispaniola, Columbus carefully examining every harbour and possible site for a future settlement. Nothing escaped his observation, and he duly noted the results in his journal. There is a curious entry on the 8th January of his having seen three mermaids near the Rio d'Oro, so called from its richness in gold dust. The creatures were evidently manatees, and disappointed his expectations. "They are not so beautiful as has been painted," he says, "though to some extent they have the form of a human face." Columbus was quite ready to believe in the fabulous in the New World, and gravely wrote home that there was an island to the west of Cuba where men were born with tails; and he was inclined to believe the natives when they told him that their enemies the cannibal Caribs were monsters with dog noses and one eye in the middle of their foreheads.

At the extreme end of Hispaniola, in a deep gulf called by him Golfo de las Flechas, he had a skirmish with the natives, who attacked a party which had landed for water; and the first Indian blood was shed. This affair was a subject of great distress to Columbus, who wished to be on friendly terms with the natives; and he would not leave the island till he had met the Indians again, and obtained their friendship by presents.

The natives of Higuey, the province to the east of Hispaniola, were a bold, warlike people. Columbus appreciated their strength of character, and as long as he ruled was anxious to meet them on honourable terms.

The voyage home was full of peril and delays, for the same easterly trade wind which had wafted them on their way out now obstinately hindered their course; and had the adventurers encountered a tithe of the obstacles before which met them now on their return, the New World might not have been discovered by Columbus. In the beatings to and fro, all but the Admiral lost their reckoning, this being according to his wishes, as he desired to possess alone the key to the route to the Indies. As they approached known regions they encountered worse dangers, and were overtaken by a terrific gale, in which the *Pinta* parted company. The peril was very real. The little *Nina* leaked at every seam and was very unstable from want of ballast, owing to the gradual consumption of the stores on board. This the Admiral to a certain extent remedied by filling the empty casks with sea-water, which obvious resource of common-sense had never occurred to previous voyagers.

All these hindrances oppressed Columbus's spirits. Not only did the fate of his two boys, who, in the event of his death would be left unprovided for, weigh upon his mind, but he felt crushed by the fear lest his discovery should perish with him. Even before his safety was endangered he was full of forebodings, and, in his own words, nervous lest even a stinging insect should impede the voyage; so no wonder he was cast

down now in the face of actual danger. Resolved, however, to do all in his power to save his precious secret from destruction, he wrote an account of his voyage, with necessary particulars, which he wrapped up in waxed paper, and threw overboard enclosed in a cask.

While Columbus and his companions did what they could to help themselves, they stormed Heaven, and not in vain. Four times, first and last, did they cast lots to see who among them should, if saved, make a pilgrimage of thanksgiving, and thrice the lot fell on the Admiral, which he took as a sign not only that God had not forsaken him, but that He wished him to be humble under the success of his discovery. As the storm raged more fiercely, the crew made a general vow to go in procession, barefoot and half-naked, like shipwrecked mariners, to return thanks in a church of our Lady at the first land they reached.

This vow nearly cost them dear. On the 18th of February the *Nina* anchored off St. Mary's, one of the Azores. Next day, half the crew landed to perform their vow at a chapel near the sea; and in their defenceless state were treacherously seized by the Portuguese Governor, though Spain and Portugal were at peace. Fortunately, Columbus was not present, for, as it afterwards transpired, the Governor had acted thus inhospitably under the idea that the Admiral was with the party, and that his capture would be pleasing to his royal master. Finding his plan had not succeeded, the official released his captives, but not before he had made more than one attempt to seize the Admiral on board the *Nina*.

On the 28th the little vessel sailed for Spain, but only to meet another heavy gale, which drove her to take shelter in the Tagus, the very last spot that Columbus wished at that juncture to visit. The storms of that winter were memorable, and the poorer inhabitants of Cascaës, at the mouth of the river, trembled for the safety of the caravel, and thought it impossible she should escape destruction. They rushed to the church with lighted tapers to pray for her safety, and when she was at anchor, and the people learned that she was part of Columbus's expedition, they crowded on board, regarding his escape as miraculous.

King John received the great discoverer affectionately, though he tried to make out that the lands he had found rightfully belonged to Portugal by virtue of the Pope's gift; but Columbus held to his own opinion. The King's counsellors urged him to have Columbus secretly put to death; but he had had enough of treachery on a former occasion, and indignantly rejected the suggestion.

Columbus's stay at Lisbon prolonged itself, and from there he wrote to the sovereigns. At the same time he wrote to Don Raphael Sanchez, the royal treasurer, a more familiar letter, which lets us into the feelings kindled in his breast by the success of his voyage. "Though," he writes, "all I have told you may sound extravagant, there would have been still greater results to record had I had vessels in that sufficiency that I ought to have had. It is by no merit of mine that this great enterprise has succeeded. . . . The Lord has granted to me things which human intelligence could have neither conceived nor attained.

Sometimes, even in those things which are apparent impossibilities, God hearkens to the prayers of those who keep His commandments. This is what has happened to me, who have succeeded in an enterprise such as no mortal had hitherto dared to imagine; for though the existence of these islands has been spoken of and written about, it was all conjecture, and a subject of doubt. . . . Let then processions be formed, solemn feasts kept, and let the churches be decorated with garlands; so that Jesus Christ may be made to rejoice on earth even as He is rejoicing in heaven on account of the approaching salvation of so many hitherto doomed to perdition."

A favourable wind having at last sprung up, Columbus left Lisbon and arrived at Palos on the 15th of March 1493, seven months after he had started. The anxiety of the inhabitants of the little seaport had been intense during that time, for nearly every household had a son or brother on board the caravels, and the joy at their appearance was indescribable. The shops were shut, the bells pealed, and the people could have well-nigh worshipped Columbus. Awaiting the sovereigns' commands, the Admiral had much to do; and first of all he had to accomplish the vows he had undertaken. Without delay he and his men walked half-clothed and barefooted to La Rabida to fulfil the vow, the performance of which had been so rudely interrupted at the Azores; and then he carried out the several pilgrimages the lot to perform which had fallen on him. All these duties performed, he went to his beloved retreat at La Rabida, and there refreshed his

soul, for he had been seven months cut off from Mass and sacraments.

While living there, awaiting his summons to Court, he pondered over a difficulty, obvious to him from the beginning, but accentuated by King John's assertions —namely, the division of, and line of demarcation between, the new possessions of Spain and Portugal. He fixed this line, without the slightest hesitation, about a hundred leagues west of the Azores, placing his pencil on the exact meridian which, he declared, should be submitted for approval to the Pope. Alexander VI. at that time filled the See of Peter; and he was possessed of such an intuitive admiration for Columbus and belief in his judgement that he accepted the proposal submitted to him, solely because it came from the great Genoese, and granted to Spain all lands discovered west of that line. When, in the light of a greater knowledge of the globe's surface, an examination was made of the line so boldly drawn by Christopher Columbus from pole to pole across the equator, which most men regarded as the end of all things, bisecting totally unexplored regions, it was found that this imaginary line did not traverse any land which could have become an object of dispute, the degree of longitude fixed by him being almost the only one of which this could be said. However, Portugal complained that the division was too favourable to Spain, and wished to have the line moved further west. A few years later, when a marriage between the Infanta Isabella and the heir of Portugal was being negotiated, the Spanish sovereigns politely waived the disputed point, and a new line, indepen-

dent of the Pope's decision, was drawn, which cut across the then undiscovered Brazil, and gave it to Portugal.

Meanwhile, the *Pinta*, with Pinzon on board, whom Columbus had feared might be lost, arrived at Palos, soon after the *Nina*, having been driven near the north of Spain. Her captain had made sure that the leaky little *Nina* could not have survived the gale in which he had been separated from the Admiral, and was prepared to take the credit of the discovery of the Indies to himself. He wrote to this effect to the sovereigns, but his letter reached them after that sent by Columbus from Lisbon. When he entered the river near Palos, and saw the *Nina* with the Admiral's flag flying at the masthead, he was so mortified and shame-stricken that he crept on shore and remained hidden as long as Columbus was at Palos. To make matters worse, he received a severe letter from the sovereigns, reproaching him for his duplicity, and forbidding him to appear before them except in company of the Admiral. He was so cast down that he retired to his home, pined away, and died of pure mortification.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HOUR OF TRIUMPH

### 1493

THE royal summons to the Court at Barcelona confirmed, by its wording, all the discoverer's claims which had been considered so extravagant, being addressed to Don Christopher Columbus, High Admiral of the Ocean Sea, Viceroy and Governor of all the lands discovered in the Indies. He had latterly been awaiting this summons at Seville, making his preparations, which were on the grandest scale. The ovation he received during the long journey across Spain to Barcelona passes description; and had he had it in him to be elated on his own account, such a reception must have turned his head. Perhaps even had such adulation been of long duration it might have wrought havoc in his noble soul. But it was in the designs of Providence to perfect the man, as well as to grant success to his undertaking; and this affords an easy explanation of the series of trials and humiliations which beset his remaining years.

Whenever he passed through a town, the Admiral formed himself and his followers into an imposing procession. The crews of the *Nina* and *Pinta* marched in

order, some bearing in their hands the various products of the West Indian islands, such as cotton, mastic, yams, potatoes, and much besides. Others carried golden crowns and masks and the slender weapons of the Indians. Nothing was left unrepresented. Live parrots figured in the procession along with stuffed alligators, followed by the skin of a large iguana seven feet long, attacked with valour by the Admiral and slain, under the impression that it was a dangerous monster. Just in front of Columbus, who was mounted on horseback, walked the seven natives whom he had brought to Spain, painted with all their choicest pigments, and decked out in golden ornaments, crowns, bracelets, earrings, and nose-rings.

As Columbus entered the presence of the sovereigns, they rose to meet him, and it was with difficulty that he was suffered to kiss their hands. Then, seated in a chair beside the King and Queen, and the Infant Prince Juan, he told his story. As he proceeded, etiquette broke down, and, throwing themselves on their knees, Ferdinand, Isabella, and all present sang the Te Deum. Truly the measure of Columbus's triumph was full—so brim full that it held no more; and from henceforth he was to taste, and drain to the dregs, the cup of disappointment and humiliation.

But he had not come back to Spain to rest. Indeed, the sovereigns were as anxious to hasten his departure on a second voyage as he was himself to go. The attitude of Portugal, moreover, demanded speed, for King John could not accept passively the acquisition to Spain of this New World—all the less that he knew it was entirely his own fault that the

Columbus the Discoverer. Title-page of the Fifth Part of the *Peregrinationes* of Theodor De Bry, known as the "Grand Voyages."

[*To face p.* 66

new possessions were not his without need of dispute. Rumours that a fleet was being fitted out to intercept Columbus hastened the preparations, and this precipitation prevented the fulfilment of two desires very near to the discoverer's heart. One was to go to Genoa to visit his father and rejoice the old man's heart by the account of his enterprisé; and the other was to go in person to Rome and obtain the blessing on his work from the Vicar of Christ. His letter to Sanchez had been forwarded to the Pope, and by his orders translated into Latin, and had caused general rejoicing and thanksgiving in the Eternal City. Columbus had a truly filial devotion to the successor of St. Peter, and kept him as closely acquainted with every fact in his voyages as he did his immediate employers. He makes an allusion in a letter to a journal which he kept entirely for the benefit of the Holy Father—and the loss of this precious document is lamentable.

When he saw that he would be unable to pay a visit to his father, he wrote and obtained his permission to take his youngest brother with him on the voyage which was pending. This brother, Giacomo, was younger by many years than the rest of the Colombo family, being only twenty-three at the time of which we are writing. He, like Pellegrino, the second brother, who had died in early manhood, had always been frail in health; and, probably on account of the death of his elder son, Domenico kept Giacomo at home, and waited till he was sixteen before he would allow him to be apprenticed as a wool-comber—a trade at which he was peacefully working when his

brother sent for him. Nature had not fitted him for the rough experiences with which he was destined to meet. The maritime spirit of his country had taken no hold on him, and the dream of his life was to enter the priesthood. However, he put aside all high aspirations at the call of his eldest brother, for whom he had the most intense veneration, and whose will was henceforth his law. So he came to Spain, and Giacomo the wool-comber became Don Diego Colon, one of whose first acts was to stand sponsor, in company with the King and Prince Juan, at the baptism of the native converts. His godson and namesake is the only one of these Indians whose name is recorded in Columbus's history. He was a very sincere convert, and a loyal follower of the Admiral, to whom he did good service as an interpreter. He married the convert daughter of Guarionex, one of the leading caciques of Hispaniola.

During the six months which elapsed between Columbus's return to Spain and his departure on his second voyage, a great deal of business connected with Spain's new possessions was transacted, of which the fitting out of a second expedition was only a portion. The Queen, who looked on the West Indies as her special property, wished their future prosperity and management to be secured in a manner which depended neither on her life nor the Admiral's, and established a distinct governmental department for their organization, which, in after years, became a most important office. At the head of this administration was placed Juan de Fonseca, Archdeacon of Seville, who was soon after raised to the episcopate

and held several important sees in succession, in none of which he resided. The nomination of this worldly prelate, raised before his death to the dignity of Patriarch of the Indies, was the first of those unfortunate appointments made by Isabella, with the sole desire to benefit her beloved Indies, but which, one after the other, brought desolation and disaster in their train.

Residing at Seville, Fonseca, with his subordinate, Juan de la Soria, held the reins of Columbus's destiny, till the great discoverer came to regard even the name of the city with detestation, as synonymous with all that was obstructive to his plans, destructive of his hopes, and offensive to himself. The Administrator of the Indies took a dislike to the Admiral from the first, partly because he was a foreigner, and a man of mean birth ; but chiefly because he stood high in the sovereigns' favour. An incident, however, occurred before the expedition sailed which brought to a climax his feelings of ill-will. In the midst of the lavish expenditure which marked the equipment of the fleet, Juan de la Soria objected to the Admiral's request, made at the Queen's expressed desire, to be allowed five retainers, shipped free of charge. The insolence of refusing him this modest demand offended Columbus's friends, and they complained to Isabella. She, angry at the slight put upon the Admiral, rebuked Soria and his chief in terms which neither of them forgave, and issued orders that Columbus's retinue should consist not of five but of thirty men. The result of all this was that, when he sailed, he left behind him a mischievous, unprincipled enemy

in a high place, who was ready and anxious to thwart every noblest and most beneficial object, provided he could thereby injure Columbus. From the moment the expedition sailed, Fonseca was ready with his powerful patronage to receive with open arms every malcontent and rebel who in turn rose up to oppose the great discoverer.

As we come across these, Columbus's first enemies, and think of his future career, a heavy black veil seems to hang over the remainder of his life, and it is with but scant patience that anyone can follow its course. For it seems insufferable that, with a woman like Isabella on the throne, small-minded men like Fonseca and his protégés—Aguado, Bobadilla, Ovanda, and the rest—should have been in a position to hinder Columbus and mar his work; or that the petty spitefulness and unfettered licence of malcontents—Diaz, Margarite, Roldan, Porras, and others as base as they—should have succeeded in heaping dishonour on one of the noblest men who ever breathed, and that their self-seeking calumnies should have found a ready hearing, and have been allowed to do the irreparable mischief they did. It was not Columbus whom they injured. The machinations of these men served but to bring out his true nobility, and the persecutions with which they scourged him produced a holiness which he would undoubtedly have lacked, had his life been all prosperous. They did their best to vilify him and blacken his character, but all they succeeded in doing was to set him on a pinnacle for the admiration of future generations. But what they did injure—and that irreparably—was his work. Thanks to their ob-

struction, thanks to their self-seeking, he performed but a tithe of what he had it in his mind to do, and what, save for them, he would have had time to accomplish. And, more than this, they spoilt what little they suffered him to carry out.

But, thanks to the merciful cloud which veils the future from us, Columbus knew nothing of the disappointments which were in store for him; and it was with eager hopefulness that he made his preparations for his second voyage. In spite of the covert ill-will of the Seville clique, there was no difficulty this time in obtaining either the necessary ships or crews. A royal edict was issued in the various ports for the supply of vessels, and, far from there being obstacles in the way of manning them, half Spain seemed eager to take part in the expedition. Some few useful mechanics and workmen were secured, but far too large a proportion of the volunteers consisted in hidalgos—idle, haughty, incapable men, who were seized with the gold fever, and imagined they had nothing to do but land on Hispaniola and pick up the precious metal like pebbles on the sea-shore. Twelve hundred was the limit set to those permitted to embark in the seventeen caravels provided; but by some means or other fifteen hundred contrived to smuggle themselves on board.

Twelve missionaries — religious recruited from various orders—accompanied the expedition, under the superintendence of Father Bernard Buil, a Benedictine who was named Vicar Apostolic. This Father Buil was about the most unsuitable man who could have been selected for the post. He was a clever man, who

had made himself on more than one occasion very useful to King Ferdinand, but totally devoid of either the religious or missionary spirit. He loved his ease, cared little or nothing for the souls of the natives, and was too indolent to attempt to learn the language of the West Indian islands. The selection of such a man by the Holy See to be Vicar Apostolic of the Indies has been severely criticized. It is only of recent years that it has come to light that the selection was not that of the Holy See at all. Father Buil was the nominee of Ferdinand, and his name was sent to Rome for approval. Now it so happened there was another Father Bernard Buil, a Franciscan, whom the Pope considered as suitable for the post as the other was the contrary; and it was his name that was inserted in the bull. It has been suggested that Alexander acted in this way with an object, and astutely took advantage of the similarity of names to appoint his own nominee quietly, without offending Ferdinand by the open rejection of him whose name had been sent in. Unfortunately, Ferdinand was equally astute, and found it convenient to suppose that the Pope had made a literal error in the bull, and without further questioning gave the appointment to his own protégé. That this was the case has been all along contended, but the original bull was never forthcoming, and it is only in recent years that a copy has been found among the Vatican archives.[1]

[1] This theory of the substitution of Father Buil the Benedictine for Father Buil the Franciscan is nothing but an ingenious conjecture of Roselly de Lorgues, one of Columbus's modern biographers. In point of fact, the Father Bernard Buil who sailed

Title-page of Philoponus, representing St. Brendan and Bernard Buil as the Two First Missionaries of America.

[*To face p.* 72.

It is almost certain that, besides the twelve missionaries, Columbus was accompanied in his own ship by his friend Father Juan Marchena, in the capacity of astronomer. The Queen's letter giving the appointment unfortunately names him Antonio instead of Juan, but the manner in which she describes him as the Admiral's personal friend has led to the supposition that it was the Guardian of La Rabida who accompanied him, and said the first Mass in the New World on the island of Maria Galanta on the 2nd of November. An unfailing tradition in the Franciscan Order assumes the truth of this supposition.[1]

on the second voyage and who was unquestionably the same Father Buil who was nominated Vicar Apostolic in the Bull, was neither a Benedictine nor a Franciscan, but a Minim. An accidental blunder by which the words *Ordinis Minorum* were written instead of *Ordinis Minimorum* is probably the origin of the confusion. The whole difficulty has been cleared up by the well-known Spanish academician, Father Fidel Fita, S.J., in a series of articles in the *Boletin de la real Academia de la Historia*, vols. xix.–xxii., 1892 and 1893. Father Buil, the Minim, had ingratiated himself with Ferdinand by the political services he had rendered.—[ED.]

[1] In spite of this tradition the fact must be regarded as very doubtful. The evidence against it is almost conclusive.—[ED.]

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLES

### 1493–1494

On the 25th of September 1493 Columbus sailed from Cadiz in command of seventeen caravels, large and small. He was watched from the shore by his two young sons, Diego and Fernando, as is testified by the latter, who was now appointed page to Prince Juan with his elder brother. This voyage was placed by the Admiral under the special protection of our Lady in the same solemn way in which he had consigned the first to the care of the Divine Redeemer, and, afterwards, placed his third and fourth under the protection of the Blessed Trinity. His flag was flying on board the *Maria Galanta*, in which ship he was accompanied by Chanca, the Infanta's physician, to whom we owe most of our knowledge of the events of the second voyage to the Indies. As on the previous occasion, the squadron took its departure across the Atlantic from the Canaries, at which islands Columbus laid in a supply of live stock, calves, sheep, goats, and pigs, for the use of the colony at Hispaniola. He wished to shorten the voyage for such four-footed passengers, for the seventeen little vessels, the largest

The First Mass celebrated in the New World. (From Philoponus.)

[*To face p.* 75.

of which was a hundred tons' burden, were already overcrowded with the fifteen hundred men on board.

While in Cuba and Hispaniola, Columbus had heard the natives describe the inhabitants of the islands towards the east as men of whom they stood in perfect terror. They were subject to repeated invasions from these fierce people, to whom they gave the name of Caribs or Canibas, who—they averred—devoured the prisoners whom they carried off. The primary object of Columbus's second voyage was to discover the island homes of these cannibals, and thither he steered without hesitation. "By the goodness of God and the wise management of the Admiral," writes Chanca, "we came in as straight a track as if we had sailed by a well-known and frequented route."[1]

On Sunday, the 3rd of November, the first island was sighted, and named by the Admiral, Domenica, in honour of the day of its discovery. Finding, however, no convenient harbour, he anchored off the next island, Maria Galanta, where, according to a Franciscan menology, Father Marchena set up a cross with the usual solemnities and canticles, and said Mass. After this the caravels passed on from one island to the other of the Leeward group, names being given as they touched at each. At Guadaloupe, so called in accordance with a promise made by Columbus in Spain, horrible and most evident traces were found of the cannibalism of the inhabitants, and some of the captives who had been seized from other islands escaped and took refuge in the Spanish vessels. As soon as they could make themselves understood, these

[1] Select Letters.

refugees gave a gruesome account of the horrors perpetrated by the savages, who swooped down on neighbouring and peaceable islands, killed the men, and carried off the women and children, the latter of whom they brought up for their table. The island of Martinique was entirely depopulated by these brutes in human form.

The Spaniards had difficulty in obtaining sight of the horrible inhabitants, who kept in hiding, but at St. Martin's a canoeful was surprised and upset. A fierce fight ensued, in which one Biscayan sailor was mortally wounded, and several of the savages captured. Columbus's feeling towards the cannibal Caribs was one of mingled disgust and indignation. Pity for them had no place in his heart, and he advised, without scruple, that any among them who were seized should be reduced to a state of slavery. He regarded them, in fact, in the light of monsters who ought to be removed from the fair world he had discovered, and whose capture was owing to the other harmless natives. He did not forget that the cannibals had souls to be saved, but regarded their conversion by gentler means than captivity and slavery as too hopeless to be attempted. He urged these views on the sovereigns. "As among the islands those inhabited by the cannibals are the largest and most populous, it must be evident that nothing but good can come from sending to Spain men and women who may by this means be finally induced to abandon their barbarous custom of eating their fellow-creatures. By learning the Spanish language in Spain they will be enabled to receive baptism sooner, and their souls

will be thus earlier benefited. Moreover, we shall gain great credit with the Indians who do not practise the above mentioned cruel custom when they perceive that we have seized and led captive those who are apt to injure them, and whose very name alone fills them with horror."[1] Among the score or more of proposals and requests contained in the letter, this was the sole one which received only a qualified assent, and the marginal note put to it by the sovereigns decreed that the matter should be suspended till further inquiries had been made. Though, after mature consideration, it was decided that the slavery of Carib prisoners was lawful, Isabella and Columbus remained to the end of different opinions on the subject.

The Admiral's anxiety to deliver his stores to the little colony of Navidad forbade further lingering in the Caribbean Sea, and having discovered the considerable island of Puerto Rico, he made the best of his way westward. He had no fears for the safety of the settlement. Not only did he trust to Guacanagari's friendship and protection, but, being ignorant of the courage which the West Indians could on occasions exhibit, he had the most profound contempt for their valour, and believed, as he assured the sovereigns in his journal, that "ten thousand of them would flee from ten, so cowardly and timorous were they." A rude shock awaited him.

When, on the 27th of November, the fleet anchored opposite the site of the settlement, no signs of the fort were to be seen save some charred remains, and, in

[1] Memorial to Sovereigns, 1494.

spite of guns and signals, no trace of any Spaniards could be found, nor was there any token of the presence of Guacanagari. At last a few natives, bereft of their former frankness and friendliness, visited the Admiral's ship furtively and informed him that Caonabo, the fierce cacique of the mountains of Cibao, himself a Carib, had attacked the fort and killed its inmates, in spite of the efforts of Guacanagari to defend them. This much they related willingly, but little by little the other side of the story transpired, and Columbus learnt with sorrow how, scarcely waiting for the *Nina* to have disappeared below the horizon, the bulk of the Spaniards had disowned obedience to Arana, and, having scattered themselves throughout the island, even into Caonabo's domains, had led a lawless and licentious life, in revenge for which the Carib cacique had waylaid and murdered the offenders. He had then attacked and destroyed the fort and its reduced garrison, which, with Arana, had remained faithful to their pledges given to Columbus. With great simplicity the natives who gave this information complained of the number of wives required by each Spaniard, and, still more, of the fact that in their greed they were not at all particular whether these wives were already the wives of other men.

Thus was let loose in the island the demon of lust and lawlessness, which effectually destroyed the belief that the Christians were heavenly messengers, crushed all hope of the conversion of the natives, and led to the brutal extermination of the gentle and hospitable race.

Columbus vainly awaited a visit from Guacanagari,

who had called him his brother by adoption, and had made himself responsible for the welfare of the settlement. He never came, and the natives who ventured on board the ships informed the Admiral that their chief had been wounded while defending the Spaniards. When he was visited by Columbus and Chanca, his behaviour, probably from the intensity of his timidity, was so mysterious as to give rise to the idea that he was playing a double part. Columbus alone believed in him, and withstood the desire of Father Buil and others to inflict summary punishment on him. From that moment the Vicar General, influenced by injured pride, became the Admiral's enemy.

A romantic incident increased the Spaniards' suspicions of Guacanagari. Among the natives rescued from the cannibals of Guadaloupe was a woman, whom Columbus intended to take back to Spain, and who, on account of her stately ways, had been nicknamed Catalina by the sailors. When Guacanagari, by Columbus's invitation, came on board the *Maria Galanta*, he and this woman fell in love with each other at first sight, and having by some means conveyed a message to her, the cacique persuaded her to escape from the ship and swim ashore to him. They lived together with romantic affection till she was killed by a hostile cacique, in revenge for her husband's unwavering attachment to the Spaniards. In spite of this attachment, which cost him so dear, the Spaniards, as a body, continued to hold him in suspicion.

Columbus did not linger unnecessarily on the site of the ill-starred fort, but, sailing eastward, founded

a new settlement about forty miles to the east of Monte Christi, on a spot noted by him on his last voyage, near a river said by the natives to take its rise among the gold mines of Cibao. A little town, to which he gave the name of Isabella, sprang up so rapidly that Mass was said in the new church on the feast of the Epiphany, 1494.

As soon as he had settled on this new site, Columbus examined the stores brought out, and he was disgusted to find that, thanks to the carelessness and spitefulness of the Administrator of the Indies, they were both deficient and worthless. The arms were good for nothing, the horses inferior, the wine spoilt and spilt by careless storing, and the provisions bad. He had arranged to send Antonio de Torres back to Spain with twelve caravels as soon as he could spare them, and when he found how scanty and worthless were his supplies, the urgency of such a measure was apparent, in order that fresh stores might be brought from Europe with all speed. Still, knowing how the eyes of all Spain were on his expedition, Columbus was loth to send back the ships with no news save those of disaster, and while he detained them, he sent an exploring party into the interior under Alonzo de Ojeda, one of the hidalgos who had accompanied the expedition. Ojeda was one of the best specimens of his class, valiant and shrewd, and, as long as he served under Columbus, loyal and true to him. He penetrated as far as Cibao, and found undoubted traces of gold, of which he brought back specimens to Columbus, who knew now that his dispatches would have a favourable reception in Spain.

In his letter to the sovereigns, taken back by Torres, it is curious to find particular recommendations to their favour of two men, Pedro Margarite and Juan Aguado, men whom he especially trusted, but both of whom equally betrayed his trust and belied his recommendation. Torres was also the bearer to Court of a letter from Father Buil, begging to be recalled to Spain, on account of the undue hardships of his life, and what he considered the impossibility of doing any missionary work by reason of the difficulty of mastering the native dialect. As a matter of fact, he was so devoid of any true missionary spirit that he made no attempt to overcome the difficulty. Most of the ill-chosen company of religious followed the lead of their superior and evinced no zeal for souls. Two alone out of the twelve sent out by Isabella, Father Juan Borgognone, a Franciscan, and Father Roman Pane, a Hieronymite, devoted themselves to the conversion of the natives. In a year they had mastered the language, and under different circumstances might very likely have converted the whole island.

The departure of the twelve caravels cast a gloom over the spirits of the Spaniards who remained behind, men who, four months before, had sailed from home with such high hopes. Sickness had broken out among them, attributable partly to their unbridled lives, partly to real want, for the Europeans either would not or could not accustom themselves to the native food, and, owing to the dishonesty of the Administration at home, the stores from Spain were unwholesome, and so deficient in quantity that the Viceroy found it necessary to put the whole colony

on rations. Under these trials the hidalgos, who had forced their company on Columbus, proved themselves to be an unruly set; and a certain number, under the leadership of Bernard Diaz, profiting by a temporary illness of the Admiral, plotted to seize the five remaining caravels and return to Spain. The plot was discovered, and Diaz placed under arrest in one of the vessels to await an opportunity to send him home. Many would have taken more stringent measures, but Columbus was ever inclined to the side of leniency. However, the punishment, nominal though it might be, was the turning point in the fate of his government of the island. Diaz was a hidalgo, and that a man of no birth and a foreigner should sentence such an one to any penalty, roused against the Admiral a spirit of hostility which was never quenched.

For the time, however, the mutiny was quelled, and Columbus, having put all treasures into a place of security, and nominated his brother Diego Governor of Isabella in his absence, started on an exploring expedition into the interior, to examine the mines already cursorily investigated by Ojeda. The mountainous district of Cibao was situated in the centre of the island, and between it and the northern coast lay a wondrously beautiful, luxuriant district, to which the Admiral gave the name of the *Vega real*, or royal plain. Many obstacles, such as rocks and jungle, had to be overcome before it could be reached, and in surmounting these he wisely utilized the superfluous energies of the young hidalgos whom he had taken with him, in order to keep them out of mischief at Isabella. They distinguished themselves

by the manner in which they hewed out a passage, which went henceforward by the name of the Hidalgos' Pass.

Whenever they came across the natives of the place, Columbus speedily won their allegiance. He rode through the island in battle array, and the horses and armed men struck terror, as was intended, into their hearts; but they were treated with such uniform kindness and gentleness, that terror soon changed to a sort of adoration. So careful was Columbus not to intimidate them needlessly, that when they took refuge in their huts, behind their doors of reed, he humoured them, and allowed them to believe their abodes impregnable.

Cibao seemed bare and rugged after the beautiful Vega, and was, moreover, ruled by the hostile Carib cacique, Caonaba, the "Lord of the golden gate," as his name signified. He, however, kept himself out of sight; and Columbus feasted his eyes unhindered on the tokens of virgin gold, whence, no doubt, came the gold dust they had found in the rivers. Firmin Jedo, the lapidary of the expedition, had fomented the discontent of men such as Buil, Diaz, and the rest of the hidalgos by pronouncing the existence of gold in the island to be a myth, and the ornaments they had seen, importations from other lands. Now, however, they beheld the gold with their own eyes, and Columbus named the fort which he erected near the mines St. Thomas, in rebuke of their previous want of faith in its existence.

The jubilance caused by the expedition was damped by the fresh troubles that awaited Columbus at

Isabella. The soil was so fertile that, with proper cultivation, its produce could have fed an army; but the colonists would not work. They had come to the New World to pick up gold, not to sow and grind corn. It was this very grinding of corn which caused the next trouble. The settlement was possessed of a few hand-mills, and when the flour brought from Spain was exhausted, rations of corn were served out instead. The hidalgos, however, were too proud to condescend to such menial labour as grinding corn, and insisted on the whole of such work being done by the few poorer colonists. This angered Columbus, and, knowing that he could not compel the hidalgos to perform their own share of labour, he set to work to construct a water-mill for general use, at the erection of which everyone was required to work.

This put the last straw to the discontent originating in class distinctions. It has been already stated that, owing to the paucity and badness of the provisions, Columbus had been compelled to put the Spaniards on rations; and, having a sturdy sense of justice, and scant respect for blue blood, he put all, hidalgos and labourers, on the same allowance. This had caused much discontent, carefully fanned by the Vicar Apostolic, who vented his own ill-temper at his present life by endeavouring to induce his fellow-sufferers to make the worst of everything. The Admiral's new edict, which, as he announced, it was his intention to enforce under penalty to the recalcitrant of being put on half rations, brought the discontent to a climax. So wounded in their dignity were the hidalgos, that a number fretted themselves into a

state of ill-health, and literally died from the effects of injured pride. As for Father Buil, he was so incensed by Columbus's rugged justice and views of the equality of all men in an enterprise like the present, that he actually excommunicated him. The Admiral, knowing that the Vicar Apostolic was exceeding his powers, retaliated by altogether stopping Father Buil's rations. This ended the affair for the moment, but it left a hatred smouldering in the Benedictine's heart, for which Columbus was to pay dearly.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VOYAGE TO CUBA

1494

It was Columbus's intention now to prosecute his second voyage, so long delayed by the formation of the new settlement; but troubles—this time from the natives—delayed him yet awhile. Pedro Margarite, whom he had placed in command of the fort of St. Thomas near the mines of Cibao, managed, by his domineering ways and the unchecked licentiousness of his garrison, to offend the Indians, who attacked the fort. Columbus did not believe that even Caonabo was able to do much harm; so, putting Ojeda in command of St. Thomas, he sent Margarite, whom he still trusted implicitly, with forty armed men to make a stately though rigorously peaceful progress through the island, with the double purpose of striking awe into the hearts of the natives, and of relieving Isabella of the support of this number of men. He laid strict injunctions on Margarite to be moderate and honourable in all his dealings, and to keep his men in severe order. Then, believing this man to be one who would loyally carry out his wishes, he started with a mind at ease to sail along the south coast of

Cuba, and ascertain, as he hoped, finally whether it were an island or *terra firma.*

He started on this expedition in April 1494, taking with him the three smaller of the caravels, his flag flying in the brave little *Nina,* the name of which he now, out of devotion to the Seraphic Order, changed to the *Santa Clara.* Don Diego was appointed Governor in his absence, with a council of four of the principal men in the island to assist him. Father Buil was one of these, and his appointment showed how entirely Columbus had dismissed from his mind his difference with the Vicar Apostolic. He might as well have left two adders on his domestic hearth, as leave behind him Buil and Margarite in such responsible positions.

Columbus was absent about five months on his expedition, the object of which was greatly facilitated by the presence of the converted native, Diego Colon, as an interpreter. He was quite master of Spanish, and the language of Cuba was akin to his own. He was, moreover, devoted to Columbus, and was a good specimen of what might have been the result of the kidnapping system so reprehended by Las Casas. In spite of this and other facilities, this voyage, while intensely arduous, did not lead to much, and ended in the confirmation of the mistake, based on the declarations of the natives, that Cuba was a part of the mainland. As the little squadron proceeded west the navigation between the islets and sandbanks became hopelessly intricate, and the caravels frequently ran aground. So full of perils was the arduous coasting that Columbus, in defending himself against the

accusation of making self-aggrandizement the object of his discoveries, was able to say, in a letter to the Queen, written during this voyage: "As for me, no self-interest could make me expose myself to so many fatigues and perils. There is not a day in which I am not in imminent danger of death."

He had, with infinite trouble, reached that portion of the western end of Cuba which trends to the south, and having made up his mind that he was on the western coast of the Aurea Chersonesus of the ancients and Marco Polo, he indulged himself in the wildest day-dreams of rounding the point and finding himself in the veritable Indies. But just when he was, as he thought, on the eve of the fulfilment of his ideas, it became evident that the difficulties of navigation and the wretched condition of his vessels forbade him to go further. He had to go back and submit to his disappointment—one of the many of the kind with which he met in life, and which he always accepted with a simple, cheerful submission to the will of God, quite as holy as his patience and Christian heroism under such trials and humiliations as were patent to the world, but which were not, we may believe, more crucial than the disappointments and vexations of a hidden nature.

On his return voyage he put in at the mouth of a river which he named Rio de la Misa, because, on the 7th July, Mass was said on its banks by a Father of Mercy who accompanied the expedition. An old Indian cacique approached and stood reverently by during the Holy Sacrifice. "That which thou hast been doing is well," he said, when it was finished,

"for it appears to be thy manner of giving thanks to God. I am told that thou hast lately come to these lands with a mighty force and hast subdued many countries, spreading fear among the people. But be not, therefore, vain-glorious. Know that, according to our belief, the souls of men have two journeys to make after they have departed from the body. One is to a place, dismal, foul, and covered with darkness, prepared for those who have been unjust and cruel to their fellow-men; the other pleasant and full of delight, for such as have promoted peace on earth. If thou art mortal and dost expect to die, and dost believe that each one shall be rewarded according to his deeds, beware that thou wrongfully hurt no man, nor do harm to those who have done no harm to thee." This speech, which affords a glimpse of the higher spiritual life of the childlike West Indians, was translated word by word by Diego Colon, and is recorded by all Columbus's early biographers. The vessels stayed some days at the Rio de la Misa, and the Admiral made closer acquaintance with the cacique, with the result that the old man asked permission to accompany the white men on their voyage, a project he reluctantly gave up on account of the lamentations it called forth from his wife and children.

At Jamaica, which Columbus had discovered on his voyage out, and which he sailed round on his way back, another cacique, accompanied by his whole family—wife, sons, daughters, and brothers—also craved leave to accompany Columbus. He recognized the dominant character of the race which had appeared from the east, and probably resolved to be beforehand

with destiny and throw in his lot with the white men before he was compelled to do so by circumstances. "Whoever refuses obedience to thee is sure to suffer," he said to the Admiral. "Thou hast destroyed the canoes and dwellings of the Caribs. All the islands are in dread of thee, for who can withstand thee now that thou knowest the secrets of the land? Rather than that thou shouldst take away my dominions, I and my household will embark with thee." Columbus received the cacique most kindly, but at length persuaded him and his helpless family to give up their project and remain where they were.

As a rule the inhabitants of Jamaica were more warlike than the natives of other islands, and when the Spaniards first appeared they attacked them boldly, but were soon repulsed. A bloodhound which had accompanied the white men took part accidentally in the affray, and proved himself such a formidable assailant that it led to the brutal usage of employing dogs of the kind in warfare with the savages.

After leaving Cuba, Columbus explored the south coast of Hispaniola, and intended to carry his investigations further. He wished to complete his examination of the Caribbean Islands, and—be it confessed—obtain from them more captives of whom to make slaves. What followed is unhesitatingly ascribed by Las Casas as a judgement on him for having such an intention. For five months had the Admiral been at sea, constantly on the alert, and worn out by alternate hope and disappointment. For thirty-two days and nights he had been without natural rest, so anxious was the navigation and so

unseaworthy were his vessels. Now, at last, his body refused further obedience to his undaunted spirit, and from simple exhaustion he fell into a state of unconsciousness; and his followers, in a panic, made the best of their way back to Isabella.

When Columbus opened his eyes once more on the things of this world, he found his brother Bartholomew by his bedside, and it would be hard to describe the joy and sense of relief which his presence brought with it. As those in whom he had believed slipped away one by one from their fidelity and allegiance, Columbus depended more on his brothers. Whatever the old wool-comber Domenico and his wife may have been, they certainly impressed upon their sons a spirit of unity, loyalty, honour, and endurance which speaks volumes for those who trained them. To Columbus, the very name of brother became synonymous with all that was true and helpful. "Ten brothers would not be too many for you," he wrote in his old age to his son Diego, while commending his half-brother to his protection. "I have never found better friends on my right hand and my left than my brothers."

Hitherto Columbus had had only his younger brother Diego to depend on, who, for all his gentleness and studious ways, was capable on occasions of great decision of character, and could, moreover, be trusted to carry out the Admiral's directions and wishes most loyally. But Bartholomew was a host in himself. He was a thoroughly good Christian, and combined great energy of action with his religion. He possessed, furthermore, the gift of government, and would have had no trouble in his dealings with the colonists had

it not been for the blind prejudice of the hidalgos, who regarded the obscurity of his birth as an unpardonable crime which made resistance to his commands a foregone conclusion. The lower sort, however, believed in him, and so did the natives. As soon as he could attend to business, Columbus gave the post of Adelantado, or permanent Deputy Governor, to this rock of defence whom Providence had sent to him in his hour of need, and thus obviated the necessity of appointing a vicegerent during each of his frequent absences from the island.

The occupation of Bartholomew's time during the past nine years, since Columbus sent him in 1485 from Lisbon to propound the great idea of the westward voyage to Henry VII. of England, is wrapped in obscurity. He could not have attempted to go to the English Court at once, as in 1485 his name is found as one of the companions of Bartholomew Diaz in the voyage which resulted in sighting the Cape of Good Hope. On his way to England he was captured by pirates, and detained in slavery for some length of time ; and when he reached London he was in a state of penury which made his appearance at Court as an accredited envoy impossible. He spent some time in working his way up from beggary by his old trade of chart-making, and in the interval thoroughly mastered the English tongue. He also spoke Latin, Portuguese, and Danish, and evidently possessed freer means of intercourse with the West Indian natives than did his elder brother.

How it was that the news of the discovery of the New World reached him only in the summer of 1493

it is difficult to understand. Anyhow, as soon as he learnt it, he hastened to Spain, only to arrive there just after Columbus's departure on his second voyage. He at once proceeded to the Court at Seville with his two young nephews, and was received with the utmost favour, for Columbus's star was still in the ascendant. His vigorous spirit of enterprise found more favour with the King than had the modest reserve of the Admiral, and without demur or delay he gave him three caravels with which to sail to Hispaniola, where, however, much to his disappointment, he arrived after his brother had left for Cuba. From henceforth the lives of Christopher and Bartholomew are intertwined. Had the younger been any but the great discoverer's brother, he would no doubt have made a name for himself and been a man of mark even in those days; but, like Diego, he lived only for his brother, and devoted himself so entirely to his service as to eclipse himself.

It was sad news that Bartholomew had to tell his brother as soon as the latter was aroused from his stupor of exhaustion; for a fire had been kindled on the island which no effort on the Admiral's part would be able to extinguish. Pedro Margarite, the man in whom he had placed confidence, and whom he had gone out of his way to recommend to the sovereigns, had betrayed his trust as completely as a man could. Instead of proceeding to Cibao to spy the land, and strike awe by his martial appearance into the hearts of the warlike Caonabo and his followers, he and his men had remained in the fertile Vega, but a few miles from Isabella, and there led

## CHAPTER IX

### SPANIARD AND NATIVE

### 1494–1495

SUCH was the news which greeted Columbus on his return to consciousness; nor was the worst over yet. When Margarite left Hispaniola he did not even take the trouble to set anyone in his place at the head of his troop of bandits; but left them—a lawless rabble—to do as they liked with the beautiful Vega and its inhabitants. Consequently their depredations and other villainies became, if possible, worse than ever. The natives endured what they could, but there was a limit to their patience, and at last outraged feeling induced the gentle, timid inhabitants of the Vega to retaliate on the white men. They dared not take open vengeance, but cut off and killed every Spaniard whom they found unprotected. Guatignana, one of the minor caciques, feudatory of Guarionex, the overlord of the Vega, surprised and massacred ten soldiers who had quartered themselves in his own village; and followed up this outrage by burning a hospital and forty-six Spaniards who lay sick therein. Then, flushed with the success of these retaliations, he laid siege to the fort of Magdalena, which had been

built in his territory. Columbus was too ill to take any active part in Guatignana's punishment, but at once sent a force against him, which routed and cut his followers to pieces, though the cacique himself escaped. The Admiral thought it politic to make overtures of friendship to Guarionex, the ruler of the province, and assure him that he was not held responsible for the actions of his subordinate. An apparent alliance was entered into, which, however, though sealed by the marriage of Diego Colon with the cacique's daughter, proved hollow enough. Columbus did not put much faith in the professions of attachment of Guarionex, and insisted on building a strong fort, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, right in the middle of his domains.

Caonabo, the cacique of Maguana, the province embracing the Cibao mountains, was not slow to follow the example of his neighbour, and besieged the fort of St. Thomas with ten thousand warriors, hoping to repeat on it the story of La Navidad. But the Carib chieftain had a very different garrison to deal with now, for Alonzo de Ojeda had been given command of this important post. He was a hidalgo of the best stamp. He knew no such thing as fear, and was, moreover, full of ready devices. At that time, at any rate, he was a man of marked piety, and was so devout to our Lady that he put every action under her protection, and carried about with him a Flemish picture of her, which he hung on a tree wherever he encamped. While he was in Hispaniola he was Columbus's right hand, took no part in the hidalgos' resistance to authority, and remained faithful to him so long as he

was under his command. With the means of defence within his reach, he repulsed Caonabo's attack without difficulty, but found it harder to hold out against the thirty days' siege instituted by the wily cacique, who surrounded the fort with his hordes of subjects, and entirely cut off supplies. The brave little garrison lived on nearly starvation rations and held out so stubbornly that Caonabo, whose army suffered greatly from Ojeda's constant sallies, lost patience and retired.

But the cacique of Maguana had by no means given up his plans for revenge. He hovered about Isabella, and even penetrated within its defences on some friendly pretext. He was not slow to perceive the feeble, disunited, as well as sickly condition of the garrison and inhabitants, and his fear of the white man's power diminished accordingly. He was convinced that one joint effort on the part of the natives of Hispaniola would effectually drive away the hateful invader; and he succeeded in forming a league with Guarionex, the cacique of the Vega; Behechio, cacique of Xaragua, the large province to the west; and Cotobanama, who ruled over Higuey to the east.

Guacanagari, the cacique of the remaining province of Marien, still remained faithful and devoted to Columbus. When the Admiral was wrecked on his shores he had pledged to him the friendship of a brother, and, whatever had happened since or might still happen, he felt bound by his promise. He not only rejected Caonabo's overtures, but visited Columbus as he lay prostrate with illness, and informed him of the caciques' league, warning him especially against Caonabo. The other four caciques never for-

gave him for this, and to the end of his life he was subject to persecution from them, against which his white friends offered him little or no protection.

There could be no security for the Spanish colony so long as Caonabo was at large; and Columbus exhorted Ojeda to do his best to capture him, as the most bloodless way of settling the difficulty. Ojeda fulfilled the apparently impossible task by a cunning stratagem. He appealed to the cacique's vanity and induced him to put a pair of manacles on his wrists, as a sign of royalty; and in this helpless condition carried him off from the midst of his followers, and rode sixty miles to Isabella with him in front of his saddle. Whatever judgement others may pass on this proceeding, Caonabo himself did not resent it, for while he remained proud and unsubdued towards every other white man, he showed the most profound deference to his captor, and expressed his admiration for his astuteness. The capture of their chief spread dismay among his tribe; the league was apparently broken up, and Columbus fondly believed that all the trouble was over.

This sense of relief was enhanced by the actual joy caused by the arrival of Antonio de Torres, with four caravels laden with stores, of which the settlement by this time stood sorely in need. He also brought out with him a number of colonists of the kind most needed—mechanics, millers, gardeners, fishermen, and labourers. Torres was the bearer of the sovereigns' written approval of and comments on the lengthy memorial consigned to his care by Columbus, and brought other letters, the first which had been re-

ceived in the New World. It must be understood that Antonio's squadron had sailed before the arrival in Spain of Buil and Margarite, and before any slander had been breathed against the Admiral, so that when the royal letters were written, Columbus stood in as high favour as when he sailed on his second voyage.

Isabella's letter to Columbus was full of affection, and expressions of her great satisfaction at all the news he had been able to send her. "We return heartfelt thanks to our Lord for all this," said she. "We hope that by His help this work, which is yours, will be the cause of a great extension of His holy faith."[1] Her chief satisfaction, she added, lay in the thought that it was by his ability and perseverance that the enterprise had been conceived, initiated, and carried out. She entered warmly into his attachment to the lands he had discovered, asked the most minute geographical details, and said how much she wished she could see everything with her own eyes. With the letter came a number of carefully chosen presents for his own use—mattresses, sheets, bed-coverings and pillows, besides chests to contain his clothes, writing paper, spoons, and stores of all sorts, including seventy-five pounds of fine soap.[2]

Besides her letter to Columbus, the Queen wrote to the colonists generally, exhorting them to obey the Admiral in all things as they would obey herself. She also sent to Father Buil a letter—which crossed him on the ocean, and written in ignorance of his shameful desertion of his post—in which she begged

[1] Letter dated from Segovia, 16th August 1494.

[2] *Colleccion diplomatica*, lxxvii.

him to persevere, have more courage, and do his best to learn the native language.

In spite of the affection and confidence displayed in every letter and every gift brought by Torres, Columbus knew but too well that by this time his enemies were at work plotting against him, and that, unless he interposed, they would probably slander him to deadly effect. He did not mind the false charges they were sure to bring against himself half so much as their avowed intention of depreciating the treasures of the island. He dreaded this the more that, though he was ocularly convinced of the existence of gold, the working of it was still a scheme of the future; and up to that moment it had not brought in an iota to the royal revenue. However, he collected all the specimens he could and sent them home by Torres, hoping that the sight of the gold would do more than any argument to confute the false statements of Buil and Firmin Jedo.

Five hundred slaves were also sent to Spain in the vessels, in spite of the marginal note to his memorial, which forbade him to send any more until the matter had been considered. His request for permission, it is true, as well as the reply he received, applied to the Caribs, whom he proposed to seize from their homes for purposes of slavery, while those whom Columbus now dispatched were prisoners of war, so-called rebels, taken red-handed. Without regard to the sovereigns' note, he treated these as such prisoners usually were treated by their conquerors. Such, however, was Isabella's aversion from the idea of a state of slavery among the West Indians, that though she

had no scruples on the subject of Moorish or negro slaves, Columbus damaged himself, it may be said irretrievably, by this action and others of a like nature.

Don Diego returned home with Torres by Isabella's desire. She had sent Columbus a detailed account of the actual position as to the line of demarcation defined by the Pope. Negotiations on the subject were being carried on between Spain and Portugal, and she desired to have the Admiral's opinion. If he could not come to Spain and advise her in person, she begged him to send one of his brothers to act for him. It would have been impossible for Columbus to leave the island in its present disturbed state. Indeed, Torres had scarcely departed before the native troubles broke out afresh. Manicaotex, Caonabo's brother, placed himself at the head of the tribes of Maguana, and once more the three other hostile caciques joined with him in making a formidable confederation.

Columbus was by this time sufficiently recovered to place himself at the head of an expedition to quell the revolt. The number of soldiers whom he could muster was absurdly small, amounting in all to two hundred and fifty men. These he divided into two detachments, under himself and the Adelantado, while Ojeda took command of twenty horsemen. The hostile force of almost countless natives assembled on the Vega. The whole plain was alive with them, and every tree and every rock concealed their dusky forms. But the small European force, with their armour and superior weapons, soon crushed the horde.

Ojeda, with his horsemen, still an object of almost superstitious terror to the natives, trampled them down ; while still more formidable antagonists, in the shape of twenty bloodhounds, pursued them and tore them to pieces. Thus the butchery went on till the survivors had fled to the mountains.

All resistance was over, and Columbus stood victorious on the blood-stained plain of the Vega, strewn with the torn and mangled bodies of those whom, so short a time ago, he had hoped to win as his brothers and children, and whom in his dreams he had seen flocking into the Church, clamouring for the baptism of which they had been deprived for so many centuries. But all was over now, and he knew that it had been but a dream. Whatever could be done in the future, whether the government of the island were wise or foolish, just or brutal, the poor inhabitants must be dealt with as a conquered, crushed people. He understood and accepted the new condition of things, and proceeded to lay the yoke on the necks of the vanquished.

The Admiral made a stately progress through the islands, as he had done about a year previously, and everywhere he met with crouching submission. Guarionex first, and then Manicaotex, sued for pardon, while Cotobanama and Behechio retired to their respective provinces, and were shielded by the remoteness of their dominions from the conqueror's visitation. Columbus imposed a universal tribute on the conquered race, which lay heavy on them, very likely heavier than he had intended. Every three months each adult male had to bring a hawk's bell full of gold

dust or grains, and was given in receipt a badge to wear round his neck; and woe betide the man who was met by a Spaniard without his badge!

The subjugated natives were prepared for the imposition of some tribute; for such was the recognized lot of the conquered. But when they ascertained that the tax was to take the form of this measure of gold, and, moreover, that it was established in perpetuity, dismay spread throughout the island. The search for gold entailed severe and ceaseless labour—labour, moreover, bereft of hope; for though gold abounded, the supply had its limits, and each month would render the search more painful. These happy children of nature had not known what toil meant before the arrival of the invaders. Their wants were few, the amount of food they required was of the smallest, and they had nothing to do but stretch out their hands and take what they wanted and return to their life of ease and innocent pleasure, singing their ballads, listening to their minstrels, paddling their canoes on the sunny sea, or playing like children in their groves. Existence was now changed to them. The toil imposed, the days spent grovelling in the bowels of the earth or scooping out the river beds, and the terror of punishment which alone kept them at their task, soon told upon them, and such numbers sickened and fell down dead at their work, that Columbus saw that he had placed the tribute too high, and halved it.

The faithful Guacanagari, who had done such service to the Spaniards, who had even fought by their side with his followers at the battle of the Vega,

was not exempted from the hateful tribute, and his subjects were ground down equally with those who had raised the standard of revolt. Such was the meed of thanks received from the Spaniards, while to his fellow-natives he was an object of contempt and detestation. Having slain his Catalina and made his home desolate, his enemies drove him about from one hiding-place to another, till he died in misery. If his memory served him, he might have smiled to remember his joy when Columbus was wrecked at his doors, and the mark of celestial favour which he regarded the building of the settlement of La Navidad. Loyalty alone kept this simple chieftain true to his allegiance to his adopted brother, Columbus; for he no longer regarded him as sent by heaven. When, during the days of their alliance, the Admiral asked him to wear a medal and some other objects of piety, Guacanagari, hitherto so docile to his guidance, turned from the proffered gifts with abhorrence when told that they were emblems of Christianity. Alas, he and all his fellow-countrymen had learnt to regard the religion of Christ as synonymous with the hideous vices which even their simple, natural code condemned.

Some time after the tribute had been levied, Guarionex, the cacique of the fruitful Vega, having pity for the groans of his subjects, implored the conqueror to accept a tribute of corn instead of gold, and offered to grow and grind enough to support an army. But Columbus refused the compromise. Gold he must have, and only gold. Other discoverers have exterminated native races in their search for it; but Columbus stands alone in his motive. He set no

value whatever on the precious metal on his own account, and lived and died poor, even preferring poverty to riches. His hunger for gold was different from that of any other, even though he sought it, and spent the lives of himself and followers in its chase, as eagerly as did the most covetous of men.

As a matter of fact the slavery of Columbus was as cruel as that of the West Indian natives. He could never forget his difficulty in obtaining the acceptance of his offer, his seven years of waiting, with his project "a thing of scorn," likely to be at any moment rejected by those on whose good pleasure he waited humbly and patiently. He knew the power of his enemies, Fonseca and Soria, Buil and Margarite. He knew the fickleness of Court favour, so that any day might bring with it his recall, and the condemnation of his discovery as useless. One tongue alone was eloquent enough to argue down the traducer, and that tongue was gold. He might discover the further Indies, he might even penetrate to the Garden of Eden and trace the source of the rivers which watered it; but if gold were not to be found there, the value to science of his discoveries would weigh as absolutely nothing in the eyes of his employers. Thus, gold he must have, even at the expense of the slavery of the natives and the sacrifice of his higher ideals. He had no help for it; at least only one desperate course was open to him, namely, to cast off the yoke, and declare that, favour or no favour, patronage or no patronage, he would not endure his slavery any longer. What might have happened had he done so we know not; but anyhow he felt such a step to be impossible, and

to the end did his best to feed his masters with their favourite food.

As for the natives, hope kept them up for a time; for they thought there must be an end to everything. But when they saw stone houses being built to replace the temporary wooden huts, the caravels lying idly rotting in the harbour, and every tokén of the Spaniards' residence in the island being permanent, hope died within them, and they turned against the yoke. They had learnt by bitter experience that they could not resist by force of arms; so now they tried to starve the hateful conqueror, and thus induce him to go away. They grew no corn and even destroyed the natural fruits of the earth; and by hiding in the mountains and forests they hoped to be able to exist until they had exterminated or driven away their enemies. But it was they who suffered. They perished of want by hundreds and thousands; and those who survived were hunted down and dragged from their hiding-places, back to their doom of toil.

## CHAPTER X

### THE MISSION OF AGUADO

### 1495–1496

MEANWHILE Father Buil and Pedro Margarite were working mischief, as they desired, at Court, and were steadily undermining Columbus's credit. Buil's position gained him a hearing. His very presence was a confirmation of his story, for, it was presumed, the Vicar Apostolic would never have left the Indies without very good cause. As to Margarite, all he said had great weight, for he was known as a protégé of the Admiral's, who had gone out of his way to recommend him. It was most unlikely that he would put himself in the wrong with his patron by maligning him. The accusations brought against Columbus were mainly those of over-severity, neglect of the sick, the imposition of overwork, the unnecessary stinting of provisions, and general harshness and injustice. In fact, the hidalgos who had returned spoke as if it were almost a miracle that they had escaped with their lives. The Admiral's enemies declared, furthermore, that there was every probability that he had perished during his voyage, as no news of him had reached Hispaniola, and that the sooner a successor

to him was sent out the better. All the while they knew that it was the rumour of his approaching return which had frightened them into leaving the island.

The result of the calumniators' description of the chaotic state of the island (which owed whatever truth it possessed entirely to their unacknowledged misdeeds) was that Isabella commissioned Fonseca to select someone to represent her, supposing it were true that Columbus had perished, or to make a thorough investigation should he, after all, be alive. But before the Administrator of the Indies had time to take any steps about this congenial task, Torres arrived from Hispaniola. His arrival, with the news and specimens consigned to him, produced the effect hoped for by Columbus, and the commission given to Fonseca was at once cancelled. Still, in spite of the proofs that Columbus was still alive; in spite of the specimens of gold, which were a practical answer to Firmin Jedo's assertions; in spite, moreover, of the Admiral's dispatches reporting the suppression of the native rising, Isabella's heart misgave her. She was sure, and with reason, that the island was in a most unsatisfactory condition, and felt doubtful how much might or might not be attributable to mismanagement on the part of Columbus. This being so, she determined to select someone herself, to go out and inquire into the state of affairs.

Fonseca, no doubt irritated at having such an important and pleasing piece of patronage snatched from his hands, vented his annoyance on the unoffending Don Diego, who had arrived with Torres.

He had brought with him, as private mementos, a few trifling specimens of gold, and these he was peremptorily commanded by Fonseca's myrmidons to give up, the insinuation being made that he was robbing the sovereigns. On hearing of this insolent treatment, Isabella was extremely angry, for she wished above all things to treat Columbus and his family with every mark of respect and confidence. In her indignation she commanded Fonseca not only to restore the specimens to their owner, but to write an explanatory, apologetic letter to the Admiral. Finding, after the interval of a month, that her command had been neglected, she repeated it, with the result that the malevolence of the Administrator towards the Columbus family was deepened into the bitterest hatred.

Nothing had been done to show that the sovereigns had lost confidence in Columbus, and no actual step had been taken of which his friends could reasonably complain ; but all the same it was transparently patent that the exaggerations and insinuations of Margarite and the Vicar Apostolic had destroyed his credit. The arrival of the five hundred native prisoners of war offended Isabella and seemed to confirm the charges of cruelty brought against the Admiral. These poor slaves were, by command of Fonseca, who took consent of the sovereigns for granted, put up for sale as soon as they arrived, but Isabella speedily asserted herself, commanded that they should be returned to Hispaniola and restored to their homes by the first opportunity.

This unequivocal rejection of Columbus's decision

clearly showed to the world that his power was waning; but the damage done to his credit was proved in a more singular way by the rupture of the solemn engagements entered into with him in 1492. On the 10th of April 1495, without apology, or even explanation of the breach of faith, permission was given by the sovereigns for private enterprise. From thenceforth anyone who chose to fit out a fleet and ask permission, was allowed to proceed on a voyage of discovery in the New World. He might, if he chose, profit by experience gained under Columbus's flag, or make use of information unguardedly given by him, and follow out the ideas to his own advantage. Ferdinand the economical was, without doubt, at the bottom of this general permission, for the enterprisers asked for no pecuniary aid, while they promised the crown a goodly share of the profits. The King of Arragon saw the benefit of this arrangement to the royal exchequer, but what is surprising is that Isabella consented to it. Columbus, penniless, dependent on the bounty of the sovereigns for every farthing he laid out in their service, felt the breach of contract most bitterly, but he could never obtain redress. The show of injustice was removed by the permission granted to him to fit out one caravel for every one fitted out by the others. He knew, and assuredly those who made this provision knew, that his poverty would make the fitting out of even one such caravel an absolute impossibility, the very suggestion of which was a mockery.

The man selected by the Queen to send on the commission of inquiry was Juan Aguado, who had

returned to Spain early in 1494, bearing from the Admiral special recommendations to her favour. Isabella was resolved on having an inquiry, and, if necessary, on introducing reforms in Columbus's government; but her delicacy and affection for him made her select his own friend as her envoy, hoping thus to soften down whatever sense of injury the Viceroy might feel at the institution of any inquiry at all. She took into her own hands certain reforms, and among other things prohibited the future reduction of rations as a punishment, which she considered dangerous to Europeans in an unhealthy climate. She directed that, for the future, the number of colonists should not exceed five hundred, and that any over that number should be sent home. She responded to Father Buil's complaints about the difficulty of converting the natives by replacing him and those who had returned with him by missionaries with greater zeal for souls. And, as a practical expression of her disbelief in the report that the island contained no gold, she sent out Pablo Belvis, an experienced mineralogist, accompanied by a band of professional miners.

There was thus nothing offensive to Columbus in Aguado's mission, but the man himself made it so. He seems to have been eaten up by vanity, and had, moreover, fallen personally under the influence of Fonseca, and at once constituted himself a plenipotentiary instead of an investigator. His credentials, contained in a royal address to the colonists, ran thus: "Cavaliers, esquires, and other persons who, by our orders, are in the Indies, we send you Juan Aguado,

our groom of the chambers, who will speak to you on our behalf"; and if we read these words as Isabella meant them, addressed to all alike, those who had injured Columbus as well as those who thought themselves injured by him, there was nothing to justify the airs of a superior which Aguado gave himself.

When the envoy, who was accompanied by Don Diego, arrived at Isabella, Columbus was in the interior. The Adelantado came to receive Aguado with due respect, but the latter ignored him insolently, and peremptorily summoned the Viceroy into his presence. He knew the natural quickness of Columbus's temper, and his tenacity of his rights as Admiral and Viceroy, and there is but small doubt that he hoped his friend and patron would put himself into the wrong at the outside by refusing to recognize his authority. But Columbus obeyed the summons, and by his punctilious courtesy to Aguado, as the sovereigns' representative, completely foiled the upstart's endeavours to treat him as a criminal called to render an account. For this was the attitude assumed towards the Admiral by the envoy, who, while Columbus remained unheard, courted the complaints against his government of anyone who chose to make them. Sickness and privation had soured the minds of all the colonists, so that complaints came readily to their lips; and even the poor natives, who thought that any change must be for the better, turned against him who was the only one who attempted to be their friend. Thus Aguado soon collected a budget of one-sided complaints, and, when he had gleaned sufficient to serve his purpose,

announced his intention of returning to Spain to make his report. To his annoyance Columbus decided to go back with him. It was, the Viceroy felt, high time that he should be there to speak for himself, and not leave the coast entirely clear for his enemies and traducers.

Barely, however, was the squadron ready to start when a terrible storm arose, of a kind called by the natives an "uragan" (hurricane)—a name generally adopted since. But so terrible was it on this occasion that the natives thought it was sent as a judgement on the Spaniards—an opinion that may not have been quite unfounded. All the caravels were wrecked, except the many-lived little *Nina*, or *Santa Clara*, in which Columbus had been about to sail; but his departure as well as that of his arrogant opponent had to be postponed until a second vessel could be constructed from the remains of the wrecked caravels. As it turned out, the delay was very beneficial for Columbus's prospects, for before he sailed the mines of Hayna, on the southern side of the island, richer in gold than those of Cibao, were discovered.

The existence of these mines was revealed to a young Spaniard named Miguel Diaz, who, having severely wounded a companion in a brawl, fled from the rigid justice of the Adelantado to the other side of the island. He took refuge in a native village, the female cacique of which offered him hospitality, with the result that she consented to receive baptism and marry him. Fearful lest her husband should tire of her and wish to return to Isabella, she made known to him the secret of the mines of Hayna as an induce-

ment to his fellow Spaniards to join him. The valuable information which he possessed obtained the pardon of Diaz. When Columbus visited these mines, about eight miles up the river Hayna, he at once saw that the place would form a better site for a capital than that of Isabella, and, after his departure, Bartholomew founded there the town of San Domingo.

The imagination of Columbus had often run wild as to the precise locality of Hispaniola, and he tried to connect it with the various parts of the Indies mentioned in ancient writings. The discovery of the rich mines of Hayna confirmed him in an idea which had formulated in his brain that the island was in fact the mysterious Ophir whence Solomon obtained gold for the Temple. "Solomon sent to the uttermost parts of the earth to see Mount Ophir, yet this mountain is now in your possession in the island of Hispaniola."[1] Thus he wrote to the sovereigns, when extolling the value of his discoveries in answer to the constant depreciation of them by his enemies.

The delay consequent on the storm also gave him time to carry out another scheme. In the midst of the cares of quelling rebellion and levying tribute, Columbus was never forgetful of the spiritual needs of the Indians, and took a personal interest in their conversion. One of the many groundless charges brought against him to his injury was that of hindering the baptism of the Indians in order to facilitate their enslavement. The only grain of truth on which the accusation was built was that he set himself strongly against the baptism of the natives before they were

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.

sufficiently instructed, in opposition to some of the colonists, who, untaught and fanatical, believed the glory of God to be advanced by the wholesale baptism of hundreds of ignorant savages. Father Borgognone and Father Pane were pillars of strength in their zealous and loyal support of the Admiral's views. The first of these two missionaries possessed the gift of languages to an eminent degree, and preached throughout the island in the native tongue; while in this, as well as fervour and piety, Father Roman Pane was scarcely second to him.

The scheme which the delay enabled Columbus to carry out concerned the latter, whom he sent to live among the natives of the Vega, so as to study their religion and customs, as well as the geography and geology of the island, and write down the result of his researches. "The poor hermit," as Roman Pane always called himself, full of zeal for souls as he was, thought that Columbus asked too much in sending him absolutely alone into the territory of a cacique who had but lately proved his hostility to the Spaniards. Columbus, who only asked him to do what he would have been quite ready to do himself, at once saw the force of his objections, and bade him take one or more companions.

At last, on the 10th of March 1498, all was ready for a start. Aguado and his attendants were on board the newly-built caravel, while Columbus embarked for the last time in the *Santa Clara*. Every available corner of the two little vessels was full. By the Queen's command the number of colonists was to be reduced to five hundred, so the sick, as well as the

profligate and malcontents, were cleared out, though, as it was but too soon proved, those who remained behind were bad enough.

Caonabo, the redoubted captive cacique and his brother, also a prisoner of war, were in chains on board the *Santa Clara.* The Admiral had promised them their liberty when they should return to the island, after being brought face to face with the sovereigns of Castile and Arragon. He felt sure that a personal experience of the power and grandeur of Spain would drive all thoughts of resistance from Caonabo's breast, though, as it turned out, the experiment was to remain untried.

At Guadaloupe the Spaniards had a fight with the cannibal natives, and among the combatants were a number of very formidable women, whom Columbus, with vivid imagination, supposed to be the descendants of the Amazons described by Marco Polo. One of these female warriors was so powerful and active that she was captured with difficulty by several Spaniards and brought on board to the Admiral. As was his wont with prisoners of this kind, he loaded her with presents in order to reassure her, and would have restored her to liberty. She was, however, so struck by the sight of the captive Caonabo, whose renown as a warrior had reached his native Carib islands, that, although she was the wife of one of the caciques of Guadaloupe, she refused to be parted from the captive hero, and insisted on accompanying him to Spain in order to minister to his wants. Caonabo was one who could not live in captivity, and neither the attention nor the homage of this woman proved

to be any alleviation to his misery. He had begun to pine away from the moment he lost his liberty, and he died on the voyage to Spain from no other malady save that of a wounded spirit. No further mention is made of his devoted attendant.

The voyage was exceptionally long and tedious, lasting, thanks to calm and contrary winds, three months. Provisions ran short, and so brutalized were the Spaniards that they wished to kill and eat the Indian prisoners who were being taken home. When prevented from perpetrating this atrocity, they were barely persuaded by the Admiral against throwing them overboard, in order to lessen the number of mouths to be fed. However, Columbus eloquently convinced them that these coloured men had been created by God with souls equal in value to their own, and could not be treated like cattle. He prevailed, and his words had the more weight because his devotion to the needs of the sick and suffering during the long and weary voyage had softened towards him the hearts of even the miscreants who filled the little ship. As soon as they had given up their brutal project the Admiral bade them be of good cheer, and foretold that they would arrive off Cape St. Vincent in three days. They laughed him to scorn, for even the pilots had lost their reckoning, and believed themselves to be hundreds of leagues from Spain. When, however, Columbus's words came true, and the accuracy of his calculations was proved, his companions were quite ready to believe that his knowledge came from inspiration from heaven.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE EFFECTS OF SLANDER

### 1496–1498

WHEN Columbus and his companions arrived at Cadiz on the 11th of June (1496), after their three months' voyage, the emaciated appearance of the returned colonists, and their melancholy yellow countenances, spoke more eloquently in disparagement of the New World than could the tongue of the detractor. No words were needed to tell Columbus of the change which had taken place in public opinion since he last left Spain. Nothing that had passed between the sovereigns and him need have led him to suppose that he had forfeited their favour; yet a whole month passed before he was summoned to Court; and meanwhile Aguado went direct to Seville, and was able to pour his story into Fonseca's willing ears, with no one to contradict him. Sick of the world, the Admiral adopted the habit of a Franciscan tertiary, in which he appeared in public in the streets of Cadiz. No doubt, during that time his heart yearned for the peace of the cloister, and in the course of the weary two years he spent in Spain he was more than once on the point of resigning his

dignities and command, and retiring into privacy. Disappointment met him everywhere. In a letter written later to the sovereigns he owns pathetically that when he left the Indies he had hoped for rest, whereas, on the contrary, he had experienced nothing but opposition and vexation.[1]

When, however, the invitation to Court did come, it was kind, and Columbus hastened to Burgos, where the sovereigns then were. He tried to repeat the semi-royal progress he had made after his first return from the Indies, decked the natives with golden ornaments, and bore the fruits of his discovery in procession. But now this pomp fell flat; for the ghastly appearance of his followers, and their pitiful tale of misrule and want, had made an impression too indelible to be removed by the glitter of a few golden baubles.

The presence of Columbus, his lofty views, and his grave, simple manners always impressed Isabella; and as soon as she was once more face to face with him, the calumnies of his enemies, the indisputable disorders, and her own misgivings vanished from her mind. In her interview with him she did not even allude to the various accusations which had been brought against him, for she forgot them, and listened with admiration and delight to all he had to tell her. She also appealed to his judgement for advice about the multifarious transactions in which she was engaged, and especially about the noble fleet of thirty sail which was to convey the Infanta Juana to Flanders previous to her marriage with the Archduke

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.

Philip of Austria, and bring back his sister Margaret, the affianced bride of Prince Juan, the heir of Spain. In contemplating the preparation of this splendid fleet, it seemed a small thing for Columbus to beg for eight little caravels to carry out the new discoveries which his mind was now conceiving. He asked for so little, and, as he pointed out later to the sovereigns, certain members of the royal household received more in annual salary than would cover the whole cost of the expedition he wished to fit out. Modest as was his request, he could not obtain it, though he met with no actual refusal. Both sovereigns' heads were too full of their domestic affairs, of the marrying and giving in marriage of their children, to attend to Columbus. Indeed, it was only by an effort that they could bring themselves to think at all about the New World.

The thought now seething in Columbus's active brain was that of searching to the south for *terra firma*, which, in spite of his protestations, he was by no means sure of having discovered in Cuba. His intention was to cross, if possible, the equator, where he believed the earth to be possessed of its greatest riches. He was encouraged in this idea by a remarkable man, named Jaime Ferrer, with whom he formed an intimate friendship during his stay at Burgos. This man was a lapidary by profession, but he was much more besides, having travelled over most of the known parts of the globe, and penetrated into the far east. He was, moreover, a man of most cultured mind, and had made a close study of Dante's *Divina Commedia* as a theological work. He entertained a

deep admiration for Columbus even before he met him, and called his discovery "a thing more divine than human." In writing to the Admiral, he addressed him as the ambassador of God, and did not hesitate to express his conviction that he was the chosen instrument of Providence for a work of untold importance. At the same time, he warned him that he was sure to suffer many trials as a token of Divine favour, and urged him to throw himself on his knees and humble himself, saying, "Non nobis, Domine, non nobis."[1]

In spite of the encouragement of the Queen, and the appreciation of such a friend as Ferrer, Columbus had to possess his soul in patience. Few bits of his life were more trying to him than the next two years, during which he was kept waiting, vainly hoping for means to fit out a third expedition. His age was increasing, and his health was gravely impaired, so that every month of life and vigour was of importance for carrying out the projects of which his mind was full, and which he felt sure would change the face of the world. While he was kept in idleness, every mariner of means was entitled, by virtue of the sovereigns' breach of faith, to fit out an expedition, explore for himself, and possibly forestall the great plans floating in Columbus's own brain. "There is not a man, down to the very tailors," he wrote with some acerbity, "who does not beg to be allowed to become a discoverer. There is every reason to believe that they explore solely for the sake of plunder, and that they are permitted to do so, to the great dis-

[1] *Colleccion diplomatica*, lxiii.

paragement of my honour and to the detriment of the undertaking itself." It was but poor consolation to receive from Isabella the assurance that "it was never her intention to affect the rights of Don Christopher Columbus, nor to allow the privileges granted to him to be encroached on or violated; but, on the contrary, it was the sovereigns' intention to confer still further favours on him."

The Queen was aware that her devotion to her children's prospects was making her indifferent to Columbus's affairs, and she tried to compensate for her apathy by renewing, as far as they could be renewed on paper, his privileges and dignities; for to do this cost neither trouble nor money. She also offered him a large territory in Hispaniola, with a dukedom attached to it; but Columbus firmly refused to take the bait. The reason he gave for his refusal was that such a possession would foment the jealousy of which he was already the object; but probably the chief motive of his rejection of the offer was a dread of attaching himself to any one spot on earth, and, by the possession of the semblance of a home, to put a bar to the devotion of his life to further discovery, the pursuit of which he regarded as a distinct vocation from God.

It must have been an effort on his part to discard an assured source of wealth, for his views as to what he could do with money were very large, while he was actually in a state of almost penury. His poverty was so manifest that he was at this time released from his self-imposed pledge of defraying one-eighth of the cost of any expedition wherewith he was en-

trusted. Little as he had to bequeath, he took the opportunity of this period of inaction to execute, by royal permission, a deed of entail, or a *majorazgo*, as it was called, in which he addressed his heirs—Diego and those who might come after him—making the conditions he imposed on them binding under pain of sin.

So confident was he that one of God's designs was to bestow unlimited wealth on him, to be laid out for His glory, that though he actually possessed scarcely enough to keep him, he made provision for the expenditure of millions. His heirs were to provide for the poor, build a church in the Vega dedicated to our Lady's Conception, erect a hospital, and found seven chairs of theology for the training of missionaries for the West Indies. Out of their income they were to form a fund which, when occasion offered, they were to devote to the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre. Columbus's devotion to the Holy See comes out strongly in this deed of entail, and its provisions manifest that spirit of intuition which often guided him. At the time he drew up his *majorazgo*, namely, in 1497, the authority of the Holy See was at its highest. Luther, Calvin, and the rest of the reformers were as yet either unborn or in their infancy, yet Columbus scented lawlessness and rebellion in the air, and commanded his heir, "under pain of disinheritance," if, "for the chastisement of our sins, schism should come into the Church, to put himself at the feet of the Holy Father and offer himself and his dependants to do his service, with all his resources, with arms and money, interest and principal, to

crush the schism, and prevent the spoliation of the Church."

At last, by dint of perseverance, Columbus extracted from Ferdinand the promise of 6,000,000 maravedies[1] wherewith to equip some caravels; though the King of Arragon could ill spare the money, and made the promise grudgingly. Just then Pedro Nino, who had been sent to Hispaniola with supplies, returned to Spain, and spread the boasting report that he had on board his vessel a cargo of gold. Columbus's heart beat high, for he felt sure the treasure mentioned must be the produce of the mines of Hayna. As soon as the news reached the Court, Ferdinand withdrew his promise, and, in lieu, gave the Admiral permission to fit out his caravels with the gold brought home by Nino. Now, however, it turned out that the boast of the latter was empty, and probably intended as a clumsy joke; for all the vaunted treasure consisted in three hundred native prisoners whom he had brought to sell in Spain. Such were the mortifications and disappointments which met Columbus at every turn. This last vexation brought disaster in its train, for not only was the importation of the slaves an overwhelming proof that there was no gold to bring, but Isabella was incensed that, without her permission, and after she had sent back the last prisoners brought over, the Adelantado should have dared to send home this human cargo.

Fonseca and others who bore Columbus ill-will

[1] This is only the equivalent of rather less than £5000, but of course the purchasing power of money was immensely greater then than at the present day.

were not slow to profit by this misadventure, and did their best to turn it to his injury. Throughout all the land he met with nothing but derision and abuse. As for him, he well-nigh gave up hope of ever receiving further assistance from the sovereigns, and wrote to that effect to the Queen. But Isabella, in spite of her displeasure, was too generous not to see that Columbus was not, this time, to blame. She understood his probable state of despondency and foreboding, and answered him reassuringly. "Your Highness responded to me with that nobleness of feeling which all the world knows you to possess," the Admiral wrote in later years, in allusion to her generosity. "You told me to pay no attention to calumnies, for that your intention was to follow up and support the undertaking, even if nothing were gained but stones and sand." [1]

The greatest trial to Columbus during this period of waiting was the false position in which he found himself, for though he knew perfectly well that the sovereigns had lost confidence in him, they would never admit that this was the case. He was aware that Fonseca and his other enemies were constantly plying the King and Queen with false accusations and insinuations; yet when he complained of this he was assured that no attention was paid to his slanderers.[2] Thus he had to accept the sovereigns' gracious assurances, and it was only after he had left Spain and was on the wide ocean, and the condition of things under which he had writhed was a mere memory, that he

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.
[2] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.

felt free to write and give utterance to his grievances. "Complaints arose disparaging the enterprise," he wrote, "because, forsooth, I had not sent ships home laden with gold, no allowance being made for the shortness of time and other impediments. On this account, either as a punishment for my sins, or, as I trust, for my salvation, I was held in detestation, and obstacles were placed in the way of everything I said, or for which I petitioned. . . . All this [the valuable products of the islands he had discovered] was of no avail with some persons, who began with determined hatred to speak ill of the enterprise, not taking into account the service done to our Lord by the salvation of so many souls. . . . May it please the Lord to forgive those who have calumniated and still calumniate this excellent enterprise, and who have opposed and still oppose its advancement. . . . I say all this, not because I doubt the inclination of your Highnesses to pursue the enterprise while you live, for I confidently rely on the answers your Highnesses once gave me by word of mouth, nor because I have seen any change in you, but for fear of what I have heard from those of whom I have been speaking, for I know that water dropping on a stone will at length make a hole."[1]

In this way two years of the great discoverer's life passed away. All was against him, for just when—the royal marriages being settled—the sovereigns really seemed disposed to yield to his importunity, Prince Juan, the heir of Spain, died, six months after his marriage. Columbus, with innate delicacy, found

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.

it impossible to intrude on Isabella's grief with his own affairs, and kept silence till the end of the year 1497. He had, however, proof that the Queen was not unmindful of him even in the midst of her sorrow, for when his sons lost their employment on account of Prince Juan's death, she at once appointed them as pages in her own household.

At last, early in 1498, he reaped the reward of his patience, and the grant for fitting out an expedition was made, with a high-handed command to press ships and men from the various seaports. But even now, Fonseca, lately raised to the See of Badajoz, being baffled in his malicious designs by the nominal favour in which Columbus was still held at Court, did his utmost to hinder the preparations, and, in spite of the sovereigns' orders, no supplies were forthcoming, with the result that the Admiral had to go about in person and see to the delivery and shipment of the stores. Ximeno Breviesca, a converted Jew, was directly responsible for this part of the business. He was a creature of Fonseca's, and his negligence was in obedience to the directions received from his superior. Instead of performing his duty, he gave himself the most insolent airs towards the Admiral, knowing but too well that he would thereby win his master's favour. One day he carried his insolence so far that Columbus, in a fit of irritation, knocked him down and kicked him. This rare exhibition of a naturally hasty temper[1] is not only illustrative of the extraordinary self-control which rendered Columbus so habitually measured in every word and

[1] Fernando's *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 3.

action, even under the most trying and aggravating circumstances, but gives us an insight into the gross nature of the trials to which he was subjected.

When at last the vessels were procured, and the stores, thanks to Columbus's personal efforts, supplied, one grave difficulty remained. It was impossible to find crews to man the ships. The tales of hardship and privation brought back to Spain by those who had experienced them, added to the false and carefully circulated stories of the tyranny of the Admiral's rule, had done their work, and no one could be found to volunteer. Before the first voyage seamen had to be pressed to serve; but now even this measure failed, and, in his dilemma, rather than let the hard-fought-for expedition fall through at the last moment, Columbus suggested manning the ships, and consequently peopling Hispaniola, with convicts. Men guilty of any crime save those of heresy, treason, murder, and coining, were let out of prison for the purpose. Outlaws, even those whose lives were forfeited, were invited to enlist under certain conditions, and that two years' service in the Indies could win a pardon for the worst offences gives us an estimate of the horror people had acquired of the New World. Apparently Columbus had no alternative between renouncing his dearest hope and turning this scum of society loose on poor Hispaniola; and all that can be said is that practically these criminals were not much worse than the so-called respectable inhabitants of the island.

## CHAPTER XII

### *TERRA FIRMA*

### 1498

On 30th May 1498, Columbus, casting evil memories behind him, set sail from San Lucar in prosecution of his search towards the south for the mainland, which he was convinced, by what he could gather from the natives of the West Indies, lay there. He placed this expedition under the special protection of the Blessed Trinity, in whose honour he promised to name the first land he should discover. He set sail with six caravels, three of which he dispatched to Hispaniola straight from the Canaries laden with supplies for the settlement, while he, with the three remaining vessels, headed south.

It was Columbus's intention to cross the equator, but in this he did not succeed, as the ships were becalmed in the fifth degree of northern latitude, and the sufferings endured by the crews compelled him to change his plans. "The intensity of the heat was such," he writes,[1] "that I thought both ships and men would have been burnt up; and everything suddenly got into such a state of confusion that no

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1498.

man dared go below deck to attend to securing the water casks and provisions. This heat lasted eight days. On the first day the weather was fine, but on the seven other days it rained and was cloudy ; yet we found no alleviation of our distress. I certainly believe that if the sun had shone as on the first day, we should not have been able to escape in any way."

All suffered terribly, but the sufferings of the Admiral were aggravated by gout—a painful malady which never left him till he died — and an acute disease in his eyes brought on by anxiety and watching. He would not, however, have allowed his own sufferings to interfere with his plans; but when he saw his followers threatened with death, he submitted once more to disappointment, and made up his mind to take advantage of the first easterly wind to change his course ; and almost as soon as he had made this sacrifice of his desires, "it pleased the Lord," as he writes, "to give me a favourable wind."

On the 31st of July he sighted the island of Trinidad, so named in accordance with his promise when he started. On seeing the land the united crews sang the Salve Regina, "and all of us gave thanks to our Lord." It is to be remarked that, however rough and, as in this case, criminal Columbus's sailors might be, they never failed to turn to God in times of danger or thanksgiving. No doubt their gratitude was this time more fervent than usual, for the great heat near the equator had corrupted their provisions and split the casks, so that only a few gallons of water remained to them.

Of the natives of Trinidad itself the Spaniards saw

nothing; but a canoeful came over from the mainland opposite, whose visit nearly ended in bloodshed. Among the Europeans were some musicians who had accompanied the expedition by the Admiral's special request, as he thought their performances would give great pleasure to the West Indians. He now ordered this band to play and some of the young men to dance, believing that the visitors would be thereby induced to come on board. They, on the contrary, took the music to be a declaration of war, and answered the challenge by a shower of arrows, and Columbus had some difficulty in pacifying them. These natives of the mainland were more civilized and educated than the West Indians. Their canoes were decked and furnished with cabins, while the men themselves cut their hair and wore gay-coloured scarves. They received a deputation of Spaniards and entertained them in a large hall, built with a façade and fitted with galleries of seats, one side of the building being occupied by the men and the other by the women. Columbus himself was too ill to land, but his delegates and the natives harangued each other, and were equally provoked at not being able to understand a word said by the other party. There were no traces of gold to be seen along the coast, but, better still, the common ornament of the people consisted of rows of large and valuable pearls, by means of which Columbus felt sure of a welcome on his return to Spain.

A glance at a map shows how the island of Trinidad is barely separated from the mainland by two narrow straits, to which, owing to the peril he experienced

The Pearl Fishers. Columbus's Third Voyage. (From De Bry.) [*To face p.* 132.

in passing through them, Columbus gave the names which they still bear of the Serpent's Mouth and the Dragon's Mouth. Through these passages the sea rushes with an impetuosity attributable to the inflow of the Orinoco, the volume of which makes the water almost fresh for miles. This phenomenon was noticed by Columbus, and though he had no time to investigate, he surmised its reason. He was very ill at the time, and with difficulty remained on deck; but in spite of acute suffering and nearly complete blindness, he kept a close watch on every phase and aspect of nature; and the result of his observations, while following the coast of the Gulf of Paria, and the northern shores of that district, along which he sailed for a few days, changed all his previous theories and gives great importance to this voyage. From the freshness of the sea and the force of the currents, he divined the existence of rivers such as had never before been discovered. Not only was he certain that he had at last found *terra firma*, but he was convinced that the continent discovered was not Asia, or, at any rate, not the Asia known to travellers. "If these rivers," he wrote to the sovereigns, "do not proceed from the terrestrial paradise, they come from an immense tract of land situated in the south, of which no knowledge has been obtained." To the end of his life he retained the idea that the earthly paradise did actually exist to the south of where he then stood.

Neither this theory, nor his intuitive perception of the existence of a vast continent, destroyed his hope that the Indies were not far off. He did not, of course, even guess at the existence of the intervening Pacific

Ocean, but now made up his mind that they were to be reached through an inlet, situated, as he surmised by the set of the ocean currents, where the Isthmus of Panama actually is. The whole direction taken thenceforward by his explorations was towards finding this inlet, and the Indies and Cathay beyond. He would fain have prosecuted his researches at once; but his ships were neither provisioned nor fitted for such an expedition. Once more he accepted disappointment, and headed his squadron for Hispaniola, there, though he knew it not, to drink to the dregs of the cup of humiliation. He consoled himself by the resolve to send his brother Bartholomew as soon as he could with properly equipped caravels, to follow up the clue which he felt confident of possessing.

The Adelantado, warned of his brother's approach, met him at sea some leagues off the infant city of San Domingo. The Admiral's arrival was an immense relief to him, for he had a troubled record of his government to lay before him; and, bad as was the state of the island when Columbus left it two years and a half before, it had gone from bad to worse, in spite of Bartholomew's really wise measures. Both the hostility of the natives and the insubordination of the Spaniards had reached proportions which filled Columbus's heart with dismay. He was worn out, and had been looking forward to a period of repose; but each year the truth was driven closer home that he was to have no rest on earth.

From the first the Spaniards had set themselves against the Adelantado's rule, and had openly refused to him the obedience which they grudgingly paid to his

brother. His first difficulties were the result of his faithful execution of the Admiral's parting injunctions. When the mines of Hayna were discovered, Columbus determined that the treasure there should not cause the same moral havoc which had arisen from the gold-fever kindled by the discovery of the mines of Cibao. He had, in the interval, found out that even the Indians would not dig for the mysterious metal found in the heart of the earth without due preparation, involving continence and sobriety. This fact impressed Columbus, and doubtless he was filled with compunction for the spirit of lawlessness which the search for gold had cast upon the island; and he now issued orders that no one who could not produce a certificate of morality and good conduct, given by a priest, should be allowed to dig for the precious metal, to obtain which every Spaniard was ready to sell his soul. This rule, and the continued scarcity of food, caused such discontent that the Adelantado had to build the strong fort of St. Christopher near the mines, and soon after another named San Domingo, further down the river, which formed the nucleus of the new city.

Then, the malcontents being reduced to silence, the Adelantado made an expedition to the remote western province of Xaragua; and his dealings with the cacique of that district are the one and only bright spot in the intercourse between Spaniards and natives. Owing to the remoteness of Xaragua, neither tribute nor homage had been extorted from Behechio, its cacique, and to obtain these was the object of Bartholomew's visit. The natives had been neither

contaminated nor prejudiced by intercourse with the Spaniards, and the tactful manner in which the Adelantado secured the allegiance of the native prince, without trampling on him or wounding his dignity, shows how easy it might have been to secure the loyalty of the poor West Indians.

Behechio shared his authority over Xaragua with his sister Anacaona, widow of Caonabo. She was a remarkable woman, and a poetess of native renown, for she composed many of the epics and ballads sung by the inhabitants of Hispaniola. She had conceived a great admiration for the Spaniards, and her consciousness of their superiority led her to try to raise her own standard of civilization to theirs, and made her imitate them in even such things as household comforts and decorations. Both she and Behechio entertained the Adelantado to the best of their ability; while he, in returning their hospitalities, treated this chief and his sister with as much respect as he could have shown towards European princes. All the same, he lost no opportunity of impressing on them the power and importance of his own sovereigns, and thereby obtained a promise of tribute and fealty without coercion or friction. He asked for gold, but Behechio begged that the tribute might take the form of the produce of the earth. The Adelantado, more facile on this point than his brother, yielded, with the result that as long as Columbus held sway, the tribute from Xaragua was paid cheerfully, and at the cost of no undue labour.

Bartholomew was not so happy with the other tribes, and when he returned to Isabella he found the

Vega in a ferment. Fathers Borgognone and Roman Pane had begun to make some progress with the conversion of the natives, and, among others, Guarionex desired to be instructed. While he was under instruction, a Spaniard named Barahona, to whom he had shown the greatest hospitality, seduced his favourite wife, and Guarionex, casting the idea of further instruction to the winds, vowed vengeance on all Christians. Some of his subjects attacked Father Pane's chapel and desecrated it to the best of their ability. In accordance with the laws of Spain, the natives who were guilty of the sacrilege were condemned by the Adelantado to death at the stake; and at the same time Barahona was put into prison, where, though ultimately pardoned, he lay for some time under sentence of death. This latter measure infuriated the Spaniards, while the fate of their fellow-countrymen drove the Indians to desperation. Feeling that even extermination could not be worse than their present condition, all the tribes of the Vega rose against the invader. Their struggle for freedom, as usual, was short. The Adelantado surprised their caciques while holding a consultation, and fourteen, including Guarionex, fell into his hands, and their followers promptly dispersed. Two of the ringleaders were put to death, but Bartholomew granted a free pardon to Guarionex on account of the provocation he had received, whereupon the astounded cacique swore unbounded allegiance to the Adelantado, and his subjects returned sullenly and hopelessly to their former servitude.

The discontent of the Spaniards was not so easily

quelled, and, under the leadership of Francis Roldan, a man trusted by Columbus and appointed by him alcalde, or chief judge of the island, a large number rose in open rebellion. Roldan had made friends with Aguado during the latter's visit to Hispaniola, and probably, like many others, thought Columbus's day was over. At the head of a lawless, half-starved band he marched on Fort Concepcion, thinking to take it, but was checked by the stout resistance of Miguel Ballester, who deserves mention as one of the few who remained loyal to Columbus in adversity as well as prosperity. The Adelantado marched to the relief of the fort and threw himself into it with reinforcements; whereupon Roldan returned to Isabella, rifled it of arms and ammunition, and stirred up the natives to aid him in his rebellion against the authority of the Adelantado, promising them immunity from taxation and full liberty. The bait took, and Guarionex, forgetful of his promises, as well as Manicaotex, cacique of Maguana, rose at his bidding. Roldan and his followers roamed about the Vega, polluting it with their lawless doings. Their leader knew that this free indulgence was the only way of retaining the fidelity of his adherents.

Things looked black indeed for the Adelantado, and doubtless he would have had to succumb before the united mutineers and natives; but when matters were at their worst some caravels arrived from Spain under the command of Pedro Coronal, bringing supplies, troops, and—last but not least—intelligence that Columbus was still in the sovereigns' favour. Roldan did not wait to risk a defeat, but went off at

once to Xaragua with his lawless band, where they led the same dissolute life they had led in the Vega, and completely destroyed the favourable impression made by the Adelantado.

The natives could not thus easily escape the consequences of their rising, and were defeated by Bartholomew and Coronal. Guarionex, despairing of a second pardon, fled with his family to Higuey, the eastern province of Hispaniola, the warlike cacique of which, Mayobanex, gave him shelter and hospitality. The Adelantado was dogged in his determination to get hold of the person of the recalcitrant cacique, and pursued him into the mountains of Higuey, regardless of the difficulties and dangers to which armed soldiers were bound to be exposed on such a quest. Mayobanex was not at war with the Spaniards, but he would not give up the fugitive who had taken refuge with him, and resisted all the expostulations of his own subjects, who found themselves exposed to the vengeance of the Spaniards for the sake of a stranger. He resolutely maintained that he would never give up one who had thrown himself on his generosity. "Tell the Spaniards," said he to an envoy who brought word that, unless Guarionex were yielded up to the Adelantado, his soldiers should devastate the whole of Higuey —"tell them that they are bad men, cruel and tyrannical, usurpers of the territories of others, and shedders of innocent blood. I desire not the friendship of such men. Guarionex is a good man. He is my friend and guest. He has fled to me for refuge, and I have promised to protect him. I will keep my word."

The Adelantado admired the noble cacique's gener-

osity, but he would not be turned from his purpose. Having sent away most of his soldiers, he remained in the mountains with a small number of followers, carrying out his threat of burning the villages, and driving Mayobanex from one hiding-place to the other, till at last, in their despair, the natives betrayed them both into the hands of the Spaniards. Bartholomew kept the caciques and their families captive, but beyond that treated them with clemency.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE GATHERING STORM

### 1498–1500

It is hard to describe the state of disruption of the island when Columbus arrived at San Domingo on the 30th of August 1498. He did not lose a day before issuing a proclamation, confirming his brother's measures, and denouncing the mutiny of Roldan; but to the rebel himself he wrote kindly, appealing to his nobler nature, reminding him of the position of trust he held, and imploring him to consider "what a chasm he was digging under his feet." However, popularity and independence had greater charms for Roldan than the sweets of a good conscience, and he turned a deaf ear to the Admiral's words. Unfortunately, he was able to strengthen his position by waylaying the three caravels dispatched from the Canaries three months previously, which, having mistaken their course, arrived only now off the western extremity of the island. He boarded the vessels in the capacity of alcalde, and in a few days seduced from their allegiance nearly all the sailors, who, it must be remembered, were criminals and convicts. The three captains, who remained loyal to Columbus, made their

way to San Domingo. One of them, Alonzo de Carvajal, who combined astuteness with his loyalty, carried on the negotiations between the Admiral and Roldan, and saved for the former what few shreds of honour were suffered to remain to him.

It was not much that Carvajal could do, for Roldan had everything in his own hands. Nearly all the Spaniards were with him, and he had it in his power to stir up the native population against the Admiral's rule by lying promises. Thus pressed, Columbus was compelled to yield, inch by inch, on every point. First, he had to hand over three caravels to take home those rebels who were tired of the Indies, to whom, furthermore, he was coerced into giving a testimonial of good conduct, and an exoneration from all blame. It is true that he wrote a private letter to the sovereigns disowning this action, which he declared had been extorted from him; and while he painted in glowing colours the miserable state to which Roldan's rebellion had reduced the island, he boldly laid the blame on those who, by dilatoriness or malice, had detained him in Spain. Finally, he implored the sovereigns to send out—if necessary at his own expense—an experienced judge, to investigate matters and restore order and justice.

When Columbus wrote this informal letter, in which he poured out his heart candidly to the Queen, he was not without misgivings lest it might not be over-graciously received; but he was not prepared for the bitter mortification which assailed him. When, after months of suspense, he did have an answer, it was not from Isabella, but from Fonseca,

the man who was known to be his enemy. Henceforth he might struggle, but he knew that his fall was but a question of time. He pathetically summed up his position in three words, which explained to him why every accusation brought against him was believed: he was "absent, envied, and a stranger." "If only," he wrote a little later, when matters were even worse—"if only their Highnesses would condescend to silence popular rumours it would be the greatest charity, as those would know who know what I have endured; for calumny has done more to injure me than my services have benefited me."[1]

For a year or more did this wretched state of things in Hispaniola continue. Roldan grew more and more arrogant in his demands, and Columbus, almost alone, was advised by even those who served him best to give in on every point, unless he himself wished to have to sue for terms; and each concession, thus extorted, was ruthlessly followed by fresh and more imperious demands. At Roldan's bidding Columbus had to give up his two remaining caravels, which he had reserved to send with Bartholomew to follow up his recent discoveries; and thus his far-reaching plans were once more frustrated by mean men. By these caravels Columbus, making one last effort to save himself, sent home a letter of simple entreaty, pleading for at least a hearing before he was condemned, and repeating his petition for the appointment of a competent judge.

A crowd of the worst among the colonists, satiated with vice, returned in these vessels to Spain, there

[1] Letter to Doña Juana de Torres, 1500.

to work the Admiral's ruin unhindered. These scoundrels took with them as many slaves as they could pack away, acting in this against Columbus's commands; for his permission, given under compulsion, extended only to the women whom these men had already torn from their homes. This permission, and its abuse, were destined to do him incalculable injury; and indeed the bitterest part of the tyranny under which he was living was the knowledge that each concession extorted from him did irreparable harm to his reputation. With a refinement of malice his enemies contrived not only to get their own way, but also to degrade their victim, immediately and in the far future, and render futile all efforts on his part to obtain redress. Under coercion he gave to each rebel who elected to remain in Hispaniola a grant of land, for the cultivation of which he allowed the so-called free labour of a certain number of natives—a system which gradually led to the atrocities which have called forth the indignation of humanity and developed into a state of things which Columbus would have rather died than knowingly initiate.

But he had not even yet reached the full measure of what he was to endure at the hands of those whom he called "dissolute people who feared neither God nor their King and Queen, but were full of imbecility and malice."[1] The extent of Roldan's arrogance and Columbus's helplessness can be judged only by the terms which the latter found himself compelled to grant. Among other things the rebel successfully insisted on being reinstated as alcalde *in perpetuum*,

[1] Letter to Doña Juana de Torres, 1500.

and on being given a written and signed declaration that all that had taken place was the result of mere misunderstanding. He, moreover, stipulated on the expulsion from the island of any fifteen men whom he might name, thus placing it in his power to deprive Columbus of his few supporters; and, as a final insult, he made the proviso that if the Viceroy infringed any of these conditions, the rebels had the right to extort compliance by any means they chose. When Columbus consented to agree to these disgraceful terms, on the one condition that they were to be valid only so long as Roldan and his followers obeyed the orders of the sovereigns given through him, their representative, this stipulation was rejected scornfully, and even on this point Columbus had to give in.

A pagan under these circumstances might have committed suicide; but Columbus showed himself most nobly Christian. The only light that shines through the darkness is the heroism, calmness, and patience with which he accepted the inevitable, knowing that with each fresh concession he was undermining his reputation, and dashing to the ground whatever foundation remained on which to build new hopes for the future. Christopher Columbus knew no such thing as placing limits when God's will was concerned.

However, Roldan's arrogance at last exhausted itself. He no doubt knew that ultimately the truth must come out, and felt he could gain more by putting himself, at the eleventh hour, on the side of order. This he now did, sorely to the indignation of most of his followers, who found the Admiral and their late

chief united against them. Columbus naturally distrusted his new ally, who nevertheless soon rendered him signal service in his new character. After the last caravels, with their cargo of miscreants, had returned to Spain in October 1499, Alonzo de Ojeda appeared off the coast with four vessels. No longer Columbus's faithful hidalgo, he had worshipped the rising sun and curried favour with Fonseca, who had in consequence fitted out an expedition, supplied him with Columbus's charts and papers, and had sent him to follow up the discoveries of the latter along the coast of Paria, under the guidance of Bartholomew Roldan, the Admiral's own pilot. Thence Ojeda sailed for Hispaniola, where he fostered the sedition of the colonists by rumours, true and false, about the approaching overthrow of the Viceroy.

What was Columbus to do? He was powerless; for, besides his own brothers, there were probably not half a dozen men who would have supported him. In his dilemma he resolved to accept Roldan's professions of loyalty, and send him to drive Ojeda from the island. This was his darkest hour. He knew that he had put his life into the ex-traitor's hands, and that it was more than likely that the two rebels would unite to seize him and slay him. A strange fear of death was allowed to overpower him; and on Christmas Day he so nearly succumbed to panic as to be on the point of embarking with his brothers on one little vessel which remained in the harbour to escape somewhere—whither he knew not. While his brave spirit was quaking under this unusual terror, he heard a voice which said to him: "O man of little faith,

arise! What fearest thou? Am I not here? Take courage! Give not thyself over to sadness and fear; I will provide."

Once more he arose and faced the storm; and from that moment matters improved. Roldan, true to his rôle of loyalty, drove Ojeda from the island. He was, undoubtedly, a scoundrel, but he was clever, and knew how to rule the turbulent spirits in the island. He promptly quelled a mutiny against himself, headed by Adrian de Moxica, his former confederate, who was hanged, with Columbus's consent. "I had determined to put no one to death," he says in his letter to Doña Juana; "but the ingratitude of this man obliged me with tears to abandon this resolution. I should not have acted otherwise had it been my own brother."

Under the influence of Roldan's co-operation, procured at the cost of such profound humiliation, the government of the island prospered as it had never done before, and some discipline was introduced. The poor Indians, though still subject to the hateful tribute, lifted up their heads, and obtained a certain measure of justice at the hands of the whites; and, responding for the first time to the labours of the missionaries, showed an inclination to receive instruction. Columbus was able at last to estimate the resources of the island if properly managed, and was prepared to promise the sovereigns a large and certain revenue. His spirits rose, and with them his hopes, and he began to build castles in the air about a voyage of discovery through the imaginary strait which was to open the way to the Indies and thence round the world. But, alas,

the light was but a passing gleam, a mere rift in the cloud, and darkness, blacker than ever, was about to overtake him.

In after years he thus simply and pathetically described the manner of his rude disillusionment: "When I was on the point of bringing your Majesties into the receipt of a very great and unexpected revenue, and while I was waiting for ships to convey me in safety, and with a heart full of joy, to your royal presence, victoriously to announce the news of the gold I had discovered, I was arrested and thrown, with my two brothers, loaded with irons, into a ship, stripped, and very ill-treated, without being allowed any appeal to justice."[1]

Columbus was quite sincere in his wish to have a wise judge appointed to arbitrate between him and his opponents. He was weary of his position, as he wrote to Doña Juana de Torres, a lady about the Court, and for six months before he was superseded had been anxious to give up the government of Hispaniola. He knew that personal antagonism to his rule injured the object of his discoveries and the cause he had most at heart, and that the wisest measures he might take would be misconstrued, simply because he was their author. "If I had plundered the Indies," he wrote, "and given them to the Moors, those in Spain could not have shown me more bitter enmity. . . . If what I have discovered lately is not estimated as highly as other parts, it is not surprising, seeing that it is to my labours they are indebted for

[1] Letter to Sovereigns from Jamaica, 1503.

them."[1] Thus it is evident that when he asked for a judge he was prepared, for the good of the Indies, to submit to his decisions, and, if necessary, resign the government.

Perhaps under different circumstances his request might have been attended to in the spirit in which it was made; but it was too late now, for his enemies had done their work too thoroughly to allow of a dispassionate hearing being given him. When the cargo of miscreants, who sailed in the same vessels which conveyed the Admiral's petition for an arbitrator, arrived in Spain, they had to justify their rebellion against him. For this purpose they forced their way into the King's presence, and poured into his ear an account of the hardships, severities, and injustice which had driven them to revolt; and wherever they went they scattered the most terrible accusations against Columbus. The Admiral's sons were hissed when they appeared. "There go the whelps of him who discovered this land of vanity and delusion—this grave of Spanish hidalgos," is a specimen, handed down by Fernando, of the words which greeted them.

This popular movement made a profound impression on the sovereigns, and helped to bring them to a decision adverse to Columbus. They were, in fact, weary of the constant anxiety accruing from their New World possessions, which thus far outweighed any actual advantages they had reaped from them. As early as the spring of 1499 they had made up their minds that the Viceroy ought to be susperseded, and no doubt the blow would have fallen sooner than

[1] Letter to Doña Juana de Torres, 1500.

it did had it not been for the Queen's hesitancy to inflict such a blow on the honour of one whom she really esteemed. Each time she came face to face with Columbus her soul was kindled with the same implicit faith in him which had made her ready to sell her jewels to fit out his first expedition; but when he was absent this impression faded. Everything seemed to go so hopelessly wrong with him that she could not help thinking that it must be his fault. It was, perhaps, impossible for her to realize the tremendous odds against him, and the impossibility for him—a foreigner and a man of obscure birth—to contend against the prejudices and factions of unruly Spaniards, secretly supported in their most flagrant violation of law by the Administrator of the Indies. So cleverly was the real character of his opponents concealed from Isabella, that it is scarcely to be wondered at that she grew to think that some radical mismanagement on his part, some lack of understanding, lay at the bottom of the constant disorder, and made him unfitted for the office of Viceroy.

Perhaps, however, the Queen would have never given her consent to the supersession of Columbus had not her indignation been thoroughly aroused by the arrival of the last consignment of malcontents from Hispaniola with their cargo of slaves. They brought against the Admiral even grosser charges of cruelty and dishonesty than had their predecessors, and though Isabella's noble nature forbade her to believe one tithe of the accusations, she would scarcely give a hearing to Miguel Ballester and

Garcia de Barrantes, whom Columbus had sent to plead his cause, so angry was she at the exportation of natives from Hispaniola, against her express commands. None knew better than the rebel Spaniards that they had brought the slaves with them in spite of the Admiral's prohibition; but when they were aware of the Queen's displeasure, they threw the whole blame on Columbus—a blame which Isabella accepted without further investigation. "What right," she exclaimed indignantly, "has he to give my vassals to anyone!" The die was cast, and, incited by Fonseca, she commissioned Francisco Bobadilla—not a judge such as Columbus had asked for, but a soldier with no experience as a legislator—to institute inquiries in Hispaniola, and sent him forth armed with well-nigh boundless powers.

There was no show of justice about the whole proceeding, and that Isabella, even in a moment of excited indignation, should have sanctioned the appointment must always excite surprise. Not only did Bobadilla go out with full powers to investigate, but his own right to supersede Columbus as Governor, should the charges be proved, made such a finding a foregone conclusion. This was the aspect which at once struck Columbus by its glaring injustice. "It wounded me extremely," he wrote, when describing the results of Bobadilla's mission, "that a man should have been sent out to make inquiries into my conduct, who knew that if he sent home a sufficiently condemnatory account of my doings, he would remain at the head of the government."[1]

[1] Letter to Doña Juana, 1500.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE HOUR OF DARKNESS

### 1500

WHEN Bobadilla arrived at San Domingo on 23rd August 1500, he quite understood the position he held, and was fully resolved to make the most of his authority. Columbus and his brothers were apart; Bartholomew was in Xaragua, Diego in command at San Domingo, while Christopher was at Concepcion, the little settlement, protected by a fort, built in the midst of the beautiful Vega. There Columbus always retired when he had leisure, and there, surrounded by nature, the beauties of which always raised his soul, he devoted himself in solitude to the things of God. He had erected a large cross, roughly fashioned from the trunk of a tree, and it was his delight to say his office and assemble the inhabitants of Concepcion for prayers before it. His devotion to this cross is one of the few glimpses that are afforded us of his interior life. To it the inhabitants of Hispaniola showed great reverence in after years, and even miraculous cures were attributed to its agency. Curiously enough, the down-trodden Indians held the cross in detestation and tried several times to destroy

it; for they also believed it to have supernatural efficacy, exercised in aid of their persecutors.

It was from this retreat that Columbus was rudely summoned by Bobadilla, who meanwhile had taken possession of the Viceroy's house at San Domingo, and seized his papers, which have in consequence been lost to the world. He annexed Columbus's collection and samples of gold and pearls, with the intention, as was confidently asserted at the time, of destroying anything likely to enhance the value of the Admiral's discoveries. He liberated, without examination, eight ringleaders of rebellion who had been condemned to severe penalties, and made a bosom friend of Roldan, whose conduct he had been especially ordered to investigate. The sovereigns, in their blind confidence, had supplied him with blank deeds of gift and pardons, signed by themselves, and these, in order to court popularity, he distributed wholesale among the greatest miscreants in the island, "making," as Columbus expressed it, "the most absurd gifts, though he began first with himself." In fact, he did as much mischief in a few days as it was possible for any one man to effect.

Bodadilla openly invited the complaints of everyone who had taken up arms against Columbus. "I never heard of anyone commissioned to make an inquiry," the Admiral wrote indignantly to Doña Juana, "assembling rebels and taking evidence against their Governor of wretches unworthy of belief. . . . Behold what a just and honest inquisitor he is!" Columbus alone remained unheard and, incredible as it may seem, never set eyes on Bobadilla, and till he reached Spain did not know of what he was accused.

When he heard, at Concepcion, of all the extraordinary things which were being done by the so-called plenipotentiary, he took for granted that "he must be like Ojeda, or one of the other rebels,"[1] and at once hastened to San Domingo to put down the impostor and assert his own rights. Half-way there, he was, however, met by Father Trasiera, a Franciscan friar, who had been commissioned to give him proofs that everything done by Bobadilla was by the sovereigns' authority. Columbus was silent. From henceforth he did not make one effort to assert himself, or prove his adversary in the wrong. His loyalty to his sovereigns was so deep, so intense, that once he knew their will, he submitted as if the voice of God had spoken. Verily he wrote no more than the simple truth when he told Doña Juana that he "had served them with a fidelity hitherto unequalled and unheard of."

This grand submission, which Bobadilla was totally incapable of understanding, was rewarded by his being seized as he entered the town, and cast into prison with every accompaniment of ignominy. "I was arrested," he writes reproachfully to his sovereigns, whom he had served so devotedly, "and thrown loaded with irons into a ship, stripped and very ill-treated, without being allowed any appeal to justice. . . . All that was left to me has been taken away and sold, even to the frock I wore, to my great dishonour."[2] Thus fettered like a malefactor, the Admiral was shut up in the fortress of San Domingo, where no one, under pain of death, was allowed to communicate with him.

[1] Letter to Doña Juana, 1500.

[2] Letter to Sovereigns from Jamacia, 1503.

Columbus manacled and sent back to Europe. (From De Bry.) [*To face p.* 155.

Diego was imprisoned in like manner on board a caravel; and Bartholomew, summoned from Xaragua and forbidden by his brother to defend himself, was put in chains on board another vessel. There is one gleam of light in the general darkness. When Bobadilla issued the order to put the Admiral in chains, not one, even among the scoundrels who had defied his authority and blackened his character, could be found to consent to rivet them on. At last one of his servants was found, "a graceless and shameless cook," says Las Casas, "who with unabashed front riveted the fetters with as much readiness and alacrity as though he were serving him with choice and savoury viands. I knew the fellow, and I think his name was Espinosa."

For some time Columbus was kept in the fortress, fettered, and in solitary confinement. Even his cloak had been stripped from his back, and his food was insufficient. No one might speak to him under pain of death, and he knew nothing of what was going on outside, no sound reaching his ears save that of triumphant music and insulting revelry held within the precincts of the fortress by the ruffians let out of prison and rewarded by Bobadilla. Being absolutely ignorant of the reasons of his captivity or the grounds of his condemnation, Columbus was convinced that the new governor would not be satisfied until he had put him to death. Life was sweet to the great man, and he clung to it; for even a hundred years would not be long enough to accomplish all he wished to do for God's glory and the advance of science.

Bobadilla, having collected, as he thought, more than

sufficient evidence to ruin his rival, arranged to send him and his brothers to Spain in charge of one Alonzo de Vellejo, whom he strictly commanded to deliver his prisoners over to Fonseca in person. When Vellejo—the first man who had visited him since his imprisonment—entered his cell, Columbus believed it was to lead him forth to death. "Vellejo," said he, "whither takest thou me?"—"To the ship to embark, your Excellency," was the reply. "To embark?" asked Columbus eagerly. "Vellejo, speakest thou the truth?"—"As you live," said the other, "it is the truth." Then, with hope once more revived, the deposed Viceroy was led, still chained, on board the ship. Not once had he set eyes on his unjust judge; nor was it decreed in heaven that they should ever meet on earth.

Alonzo de Vellejo, though actually in the employ of Fonseca, was an honourable man, and as soon as the caravel was out of sight of land he respectfully attempted to remove the Admiral's chains. But Columbus would not permit it, and the words in which he refused are memorable. "Since," said he, "the King has commanded that I should obey his Governor, he shall find me as obedient in this as I have been to all his other commands. Nothing but his command shall strike off these chains. If twelve years of hardship and fatigue; if continued danger and frequent famine; if the ocean first opened, and five times passed and repassed, to add a new world abounding in wealth to the Spanish monarchy; if an infirm and premature old age brought on by these services deserve these chains as a reward, it is fitting

I should wear them even unto Spain, and keep them by me as memorials to the end of my life."

We know little or nothing of Columbus's interior state during those days of trial, when to the bitterest humiliation was added physical suffering; for he was in a state of health which called for every possible alleviation rather than a hard prison and galling chains. But he loved those chains. He always kept them by him; they hung before his eyes as he breathed his last breath, and his parting injunction was that they should be buried with him. It was no spirit of pride, no cherished sense of injury, which made him thus cling to these tokens of a humiliation as profound as ever befell mortal man. His simple, gentle forgiveness of the injury when atonement was made, his future services on behalf of those who had inflicted it, forbid the thought. Little as we know about his interior life, his action about the chains tells us that he was living very close to God during that hour of darkness; and that he loved humiliation with that love of it which we find in the lives of the saints.

During his captivity in San Domingo, and on his voyage to Spain, Columbus poured forth his feelings in the intimate letter to Doña Juana de Torres already mentioned, to which we owe our knowledge of most of the details of Bobadilla's misdoings and his own disgrace. The absence of all rancour in his soul is remarkable and touching. While he "solemnly declared that he could not think for what reason he had been made a prisoner," he was so generously anxious that no blame should attach itself to the sovereigns that he was humbly ready to think he

must have offended unwittingly. "I know assuredly that the errors which I may have fallen into have been committed without any intention of doing wrong, and I think that their Highnesses will believe me when I say so, for I know that they show mercy even towards those who intentionally do injury to their service. I feel, however, certain that the day will come when they will treat me much better, since, if I have been in error, it has been innocently, and under the force of circumstances, as they will, beyond doubt, shortly understand. . . . I should much like to clear myself of this affair, and do so, if only it were etiquette, face to face with my Queen. . . . Can it be that honour and favour are to be conferred on him who has plundered their Highnesses? Can it be that he who has defended and preserved their cause through many dangers is to be dragged through the mire?"

Words of actual complaint we find but few, though in one place he allows his friend to see the real bitterness of his soul. "Although," he says, "it is a novelty for me to complain of the world's ill-usage, it is no novelty for the world to practise it. Many are the contests I have had with it; but I have been able to resist all its attacks till now. Neither strength nor prudence are of any avail against it now, and it has reduced me cruelly to the lowest ebb. He who created us all is my only help. I have always found His arm ready to uphold me. . . . Our Lord God keeps His power and wisdom as of old, and punishes injustice and ingratitude."

Neither his trust in God nor his belief in the justice of the sovereigns were vain. Bobadilla was stupid

as well as brutal when he sent Columbus to Spain in chains. His malice outwitted itself, and brought about his own ruin. When the caravel, with its prisoner on board, arrived at Cadiz, there was but one cry of indignation and horror. Thanks to Vellejo's promptitude, the Admiral's letter to Doña Juana reached the Court before Bobadilla's dispatches, and at once peremptory orders were sent to strike off Columbus's chains. Ferdinand and Isabella wrote to him, full of unfeigned sorrow at what had occurred, and directed that two thousand ducats should be advanced to enable him to procure a suitable outfit to appear before them.

When Isabella heard of the treatment to which he had been subjected, she could scarcely contain herself for grief and shame. She may have erred in allowing herself to be prejudiced against Columbus without giving him a hearing, and in having entrusted his honour to an untried man; but if she erred she was punished as it rarely befalls one to be punished on earth. The Admiral's interview with her is memorable. Not one word of complaint had escaped his lips during those long weeks of ignominy and injustice; but now, when he stood before the Queen, and saw the generous tears spring to her eyes, his long reserve broke down, and, falling on his knees, he sobbed like a child.

## CHAPTER XV

### PATIENCE

### 1500–1502

THE sovereigns made what amends they could to Columbus for the disgrace inflicted on him in their name, and, to show how completely they disbelieved the charges brought against him, they paid no attention whatever to Bobadilla's dispatches. But the Admiral's honour had been too closely touched for him to suffer what had occurred to be quietly buried in oblivion, and he thought it but just to himself and his heirs to make a formal complaint of the treatment to which he had been subjected, which he addressed to the sovereigns through the members of the Council. He pointed out the sacrifices he had made for them, how he had abandoned his own country to serve them, and left wife and children for their sake, so that he had scarcely seen them. "The Redeemer leading the way," he added, "I gave to your Highnesses lands larger than Africa or Europe. In seven years I had by God's aid accomplished this conquest, when lo, at the moment when I hoped to obtain the recompense of my labours and win repose, I was seized, and laden

with chains, to the detriment of my honour and your service."

More apologies and more kind words were lavished on Columbus in response to his complaint, but his dignities and privileges, of which he had been forcibly deprived, were never restored to him, being withheld from him on one plea or the other. He was told that it was inexpedient to make such restitution at the actual moment; and though Isabella, no doubt, intended that all his honours should be eventually restored, it seems equally certain that Ferdinand meant to withhold them. As a matter of fact, the proportions taken by later explorations had in the King of Arragon's eyes changed the aspect of Columbus' great discovery. Vincent Pinzon had sailed as far as the eastern extremity of Brazil; Bastides had gone as far west as the Gulf of Darien. The new continent was becoming known without Columbus's help, and it was conveniently ignored that, had he not first ventured across the Mare Tenebrosum, and insisted that land lay beyond it, none of these later men of enterprise would have undertaken their voyages.

There were, moreover, deeper reasons than mere ingratitude why Columbus's claims should, in Ferdinand's opinion, be reconsidered. The Portuguese Vasco da Gama had, since the discovery of the New World, doubled the Cape of Good Hope, and opened the eastern route to the Indies; and the Englishman, Cabot, had explored the coast of North America from Newfoundland to Florida. This foreign competition made the West Indies a most important possession—too important to be risked for such considerations as

sentiment or generosity. Ferdinand had never cared for Columbus; he could neither understand him nor give him his confidence, and, knowing him to be, as it were, at his mercy, he resolved to supersede him in the office of Viceroy, provided he could do so without laying himself obviously open to the charge of injustice.

Both the King and Isabella were agreed in the inexpediency of immediately reinstating Columbus as Governor of Hispaniola, and they selected as a substitute Nicholas de Ovanda, a Knight of the Order of Alcantara, a man of high repute for honour, justice, and even humility; and him they sent to execute judgement on Bobadilla, and restore order in the unhappy island. His mission was to last two years, and it was promised that at the end of that time Columbus should resume the government. Isabella intended that this promise should be kept, but probably Ferdinand never contemplated Columbus's reinstatement. The choice of Ovanda was made with deliberation; but the same unlucky genius which had presided over the selection of his predecessors presided over his, and, even setting aside his personal lack of justice and generosity towards Columbus, it is hard to say whether he or Bobadilla most grossly abused the viceregal authority.

The account of Bobadilla's misdoings brought home by Columbus and his brothers had been unreservedly believed; and now each ship that returned from Hispaniola brought worse and worse accounts. To court popularity he had outdone Roldan's example, and granted such universal licence as was rapidly converting the island into a pandemonium. For the

same end he had given general leave to anyone to work in the mines, and had reduced the royalty due to the crown to one-eleventh of the produce; and yet so cruel was he in his measures for extorting work from the Indians, that this eleventh exceeded in value the third demanded by Columbus. All the natives were divided into classes, each class having to labour uninterruptedly for a certain period. But a small percentage survived to finish their term of service, and those who did returned home only to find their hearths desolate, and their wives and daughters the property of any Spaniard who chose to take them. Every white man was allowed absolute control over a certain number of Indians, and the tyranny exercised over these slaves was simply appalling. They were made into beasts of burden, and scourged and tortured from mere fiendish love of cruelty.

Each report of this kind went like a knife through Isabella's heart, and she did all in her power to hasten the departure of Ovanda with his thirty-five vessels, little knowing that this Governor of her choice would outdo Bobadilla in atrocity, in spite of the strict injunction that she laid on him to see, above all things, that justice was done to the natives. Columbus was, indeed, superseded, but Isabella took him into her confidence, and by his advice sent out a number of respectable married colonists with their families. His experience showed him that settlers of this kind were the only ones likely to interest themselves in the improvement of the island; and that, moreover, their presence might act as a check on the flood of licence and licentiousness which was overwhelming His-

paniola. The Admiral's interests were not neglected, and the Queen sent out Alonzo de Carvajal for the sole purpose of collecting his dues.

It was about eighteen months before the sovereigns found it convenient to fit out the expedition which Columbus had petitioned for almost as soon as his fetters had been removed. His ardour for discovery remained undamped, and he longed to go in search of the imaginary strait. Still, he made full use of the leisure forced on him; for his time of humiliation had left an indelible stamp on his soul. During the interval between his third and fourth voyages he lived with the Franciscans, either at Grenada or Zubia, and devoted himself almost entirely to the things of God. He gave himself over to a closer study of the Scriptures, and collected the passages which he confidently believed to be prophecies of the recovery of Jerusalem by means of the discovery of the Indies, and published the collection with comments under the name of *Libro de las Profecias.* This book has perished except under the form of a rough copy. Complete destruction has also been the fate of some spiritual canticles in Spanish which he wrote about the same time, one fragment only having survived, namely, a paraphrase on the words "Memorare novissima tua." Another sacred poem on the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, written while he was a castaway in Jamaica, has also escaped destruction.

It was only nine years since he had started on his discoveries, full of faith in the wonders which, by God's help, he was going to perform, and in the strength of which he promised to undertake an ex-

pedition at his own expense for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre. Seven years was the limit he had set himself for the performance of his promise; and now, though two years beyond this limit had passed, he was no nearer his end than when he landed a penniless stranger at Palos. In fact, he never had been poorer than now, and, far from having means to equip an army, he had not, as he himself says, wherewithal to make the smallest offering in Church. Even his sanguine temperament could not blind him to the fact that his promises could never be performed, and, knowing this, he vainly appealed to the sovereigns to undertake the holy war in his stead. He did not comprehend that the age of crusades was over.

During this sojourn in Spain, Columbus wrote a letter to Alexander VI., regretting his inability to throw himself in person at his feet, describing the promises he had made for the advancement of the kingdom of God, and drawing a picture of his actual circumstances. Our Lord, he said, had clearly shown him that necessary funds could be raised, but Satan had hitherto so completely frustrated his efforts that his vow remained unperformed; and now, moreover, the government had been violently wrested from him. In all this he recognized the machinations of the arch-enemy, who feared that his holy object might be accomplished. Even though the hope of being the deliverer of the Holy Sepulchre faded before his eyes, still, he was as sanguine as ever about the conversion of the New World by his means. He, a layman, asked the Pope for almost unlimited authority and free permission to select missionaries from certain

monasteries he named, and to impose the condition that they should, if necessary, be received back into the various communities. "By this means," he added, "I hope in the Lord to be able to proclaim His Holy Name and Gospel in the whole universe." Mention is made in this letter of a journal which he had kept during his several voyages, solely for the benefit of the Holy See; but this treasure, like most of his other writings, has perished.

Thus patiently yet actively did Columbus pass eighteen months, till, early in 1502, he was positively urged to undertake a fourth voyage. The great results which had accrued from Vasco da Gama's discovery of the eastern route to the Indies made Ferdinand keenly anxious to open out, if possible, the western route. The Admiral's own belief in the existence of the strait had kindled a like faith in the minds of the sovereigns; and an order was given to fit out four caravels. Loyal as he was, and inclined to judge others by his own standard of honour, Columbus deemed it prudent to take certain precautions. He consented to allow the question of the restoration of his dignities to stand over till his return, but, to avoid the possibility of the destruction of the documents on which his rights were based, he had three duplicate copies made, which he entrusted to different guardians.

This done, he was ready to start. The Adelantado, who could not recover from the bitterness caused by his late treatment, and wished to have nothing further to do with Spain or its sovereigns, was very loth to accompany his brother, and yielded only to pressure.

Don Diego, with the Admiral's consent, severed himself from his fortunes and embraced the ecclesiastical state, for which he had yearned from boyhood. Fernando, Columbus's youngest son, a mere boy, accompanied his father on this voyage; and the Queen, full of a delicate compassion for the poverty of the Admiral, transferred the page's salary of the younger son to the elder, Diego, who still remained attached to the Court.

The little fleet sailed on the 9th of May 1502. "I made not this voyage to obtain either honour or fortune," Columbus wrote later. "This is certain, for all hope of such had disappeared before my departure." Such was the state of mind in which he started, and it was well for him that his sense of duty was unmixed with illusions, for, in spite of the real, substantial, and valuable discoveries he made, he met with more disappointments and mortifications during this than on any previous voyage. His very departure was a humiliation, for he received strict orders not to touch at Hispaniola. Be it said, however, that it was never intended that the prohibition should expose him to the insults he actually received from Ovanda.

He had no wish to disregard the sovereigns' prohibition, but having, as soon as he was in the open ocean, found that the *Gallego*, one of the four caravels, was such a hopelessly bad sailer as to impede the whole undertaking, he ventured within reach of San Domingo, and sent a message to request Ovanda to exchange her for one of the other thirty or more caravels which lay at anchor off Hispaniola. Ovanda's refusal was haughty and peremptory, and more insult-

ing still was his refusal to Columbus's humble request for permission to take shelter from a storm which he predicted. Thus, to quote his own words, he was "driven away from a land and harbour, which it had been God's will he should win for Spain with so much toil and danger."[1] So absent, however, from his mind was all cherishing of a grievance, so noble was his spirit of forgiveness, that, in spite of the rebuff, and at the risk of further insult, he sent once more to the man who had supplanted him, and who had shown such singular want of generosity, to warn him that a hurricane might be expected shortly, and exhort him to detain the fleet of thirty-five sail which was about to return to Spain with Bobadilla, Roldan, and a number of rebels whom Ovanda had tried and condemned. A great amount of treasure, including the largest nugget of gold ever found on the island, was to be sent to Spain by this fleet.

Ovanda's pride and obstinacy forbade him to listen to the man whom he had injured, and the unlucky fleet put to sea. The sky was clear, and there were no signs whatever of the coming storm, and so fair was the weather that no one could ever say on what Columbus based his prediction, which was not fulfilled till some days after he made it. But he was proved to be but too right. Two days after the fleet sailed the most terrible hurricane arose, and nearly every ship was lost. The first to sink was that which contained Bobadilla, Roldan, and Guarionex, who had been kept imprisoned ever since the Adelantado captured him. Every fragment of gold, obtained at the

[1] Letter to Sovereigns, 1503.

price of countless lives, went to the bottom. Only three half-wrecked caravels, containing some among the poorer colonists, made their way back to San Domingo, and out of the thirty-five which sailed, only one small vessel reached Spain. This was the *Aguja*, which contained four thousand pieces of gold which Carvajal, Columbus's faithful friend, had realized out of his ruined property. That the effects of the hurricane were a judgement from Heaven on the persecutors of Columbus, no one at the time attempted to doubt. It was but a poor salve to the great discoverer's wounded honour that Ovanda received a sharp reprimand from the sovereigns for having, under the circumstances, refused Columbus's requests, and for having rejected his advice; for Ovanda's pride cost Spain dear.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SEARCH FOR THE STRAIT

### 1502–1504

PROVIDENCE watched over Columbus and his companions. Driven from the only harbour within reach, they sought what shelter they could find under the lee of the island, and, wonderful to say, escaped injury, though it was owing solely to Bartholomew's consummate seamanship that the *Gallego* was kept afloat. When the hurricane had abated Columbus was easily able to make good all defects consequent on the storm, and, after visiting Jamaica and Cuba, he struck south, and arrived off the coast of Honduras on the 30th of July 1502.

Soon after his arrival a large canoe, paddled by twenty-five natives, and having on board a cacique and his family, arrived from the west. They evidently belonged to a very much higher state of civilization than the West Indians, for both men and women were clothed in skilfully woven and bright coloured garments, and carried weapons made of copper. The men, however, were painted and tattooed in such a hideous fashion as to strike terror into young Fernando's heart. Columbus believed these natives

had come from the Grand Khan's territories, and for a moment it was touch and go whether he prosecuted his discoveries to the west or east. Had he followed his first impulse and gone west, he would, no doubt, have been the discoverer of Mexico. However, he adhered to his original plan. He always had a single eye to his object in view, and refused to be tempted to give up his search for the strait.

On this voyage, which he considered the "most honourable and advantageous" of all he undertook, he sailed along the coasts of Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, examining every indentation and point on the way, till he found himself in the Gulf of Darien, past the spot where Nombre de Dios now stands, and where his observations had led him to expect the strait of which he was in search. He got as far as that, but under what difficulties it is hard to describe. It seemed, indeed, to be his destiny that none of his undertakings were to be blessed with success—save what he accomplished during the first few weeks of unclouded joy which attended his first discovery of the New World. Ever after, something came in the way each time that he seemed on the point of attaining his object. When not frustrated in his plans by official niggardliness or the folly and selfishness of his followers, nature itself took up arms against him and barred the way.

For four months or more he contended with unflinching determination against contrary winds and terrific storms, as well as a new terror of the deep encountered in those waters, for his vessels were so riddled by teredos, or ship worms, that he could

scarcely keep them afloat. Moreover, by the end of the three months the provisions on board had become so corrupt that even the roughest mariners could not eat except under the veil of darkness.

One storm he encountered he describes in his letter to the sovereigns as being more terrific than any he had ever seen. "Many whom we thought brave showed signs of fear," he wrote; "but the distress of my son, who was with me, grieved me to the soul, the more when I considered his tender age, for he was but thirteen years old, and he enduring so much toil for so long a time. Our Lord, however, gave him such strength as even to enable him to encourage the rest, and he worked as if he had been eighty years at sea. All this was a consolation to me. But I myself had fallen so sick as to be many times at the point of death; but I directed our course from a little cabin that I had caused to be made on deck. My brother was in the ship that was in the worst condition and the most exposed to danger, and my grief on this account was the greater that I had brought him with me against his will."

The men in their terror made vows and promises, and a few even vowed to embrace a religious life, "while some of them," Columbus added, "would frequently go to their messmates to make confession." One priest, Father Alexander, a Franciscan, had accompanied the expedition in the *Vizcaino*, but the tempestuous weather forbade any communication between the vessels, and after four months' buffeting, before they put into harbour, the poor friar had died, worn out by privation and hardships.

When the terrific gale, or series of gales, subsided, the wind remained obstinately contrary, and it was the second week in November before the furthest point was reached. As he went slowly along Costa Rica and Veragua, Columbus saw signs of a far greater abundance of gold than he had hitherto come across, but he would not stop to collect any specimens, saying that he would return later when he had accomplished his end. This once he allowed himself to follow his bent, and devoted himself to the lasting glory of discovery rather than to the search for riches.

The natives all along this northern coast of South America were very superior in civilization to the West Indians. They understood the nature of a bargain, and were too proud to receive presents without giving an equivalent in return. Their stone houses were architecturally built, and at one place Columbus came across the tomb of a cacique as large as a house and richly sculptured.

At last the worm-eaten caravels and their worn-out crews reached the furthest point which the Admiral had in view when he started from Honduras, a spot already reached from the east by Bastides two years previously. Though there is no allusion to it in his letters, Columbus's disappointment at finding no inlet after all must have been great. He did not know how narrow was the neck of land at the spot indicated, nor how very nearly right a conclusion he had intuitively formed. However, strait there was evidently none. Disappointment was the order of his life, and he accepted it too readily to even mention it on paper.

Now the crews clamoured to return to Veragua to

explore the gold mines, and to this the Admiral gave a willing consent. But the westerly wind, for which he had for three months sighed, now sprang up, too late to help him, but in time to hinder his return voyage. Moreover, it soon developed into a tropical storm, through which it is marvellous how his half-sinking ships could have lived. Columbus describes the sea and sky as though they were on fire, and he wondered how it was the ships were not consumed. Then, out of the fiery darkness there surged towards them a seething waterspout. The Admiral lay on the ground in his deck cabin, seemingly at death's door; but he rose up to confront the new peril, which he and his followers equally believed to be an emissary of the spirit of evil. He met it with a blessed candle in hand, and, while he made the sign of the cross with his sword, he repeated the beginning of St. John's Gospel, and the monster of the deep collapsed.

After a tedious voyage westward along what Columbus consequently named the Coast of Contradictions, the vessels, on the feast of the Epiphany, 1503, reached a pleasant anchorage at the mouth of a river to which, in honour of the feast, he gave the name of Belen or Bethlehem, in the neighbourhood of which the Adelantado discovered a veritable wealth of gold mines. On this spot Columbus resolved to plant a settlement of eighty men, where, at least, he could be independent, and find compensation for his rejection from Hispaniola. He began at once to build, and had meant to return to Spain to fetch supplies, but was detained till April by the sudden sinking of the river after the autumn rains, which left

Columbus meets with Flying Fish. (From De Bry.)

a bar across the mouth of the river, and fortunate it was for the Spaniards that he was detained. The cacique of the country, Quibian, and his tribe, very unlike the timid West Indians, were incensed by the arrival of the intruders, and quietly entered into a league with four other tribes, with the view of annihilating the handful of white men. Fortunately, Diego Mendez, one of the truest friends Columbus ever had, suspected treachery and discovered the plot. Without hesitation Bartholomew took the offensive, attacked Quibian in his own home, captured him and his family, and secured a quantity of precious spoil. All would have ended well had not Sanchez, the sailor placed in charge of the captured cacique, suffered him to escape. In spite of this, Columbus, thinking that the fact of his retaining Quibian's family captive would secure the good behaviour of the cacique, would not delay his departure, and, seizing the opportunity of a rise in the river, left Belen in April, one caravel being left for the use of the colony.

The sight of the retreating vessels with his wife and children on board had the opposite effect on Quibian to what Columbus had anticipated, and, mad with rage, he attacked Bartholomew in the recently constructed fort. Fortunately, Columbus and the three caravels were detained by contrary winds just out of sight of land, and, while waiting, the Admiral sent his only boat to Belen for water. This boat was surprised by Quibian's followers, and all the crew were put to death save one, who carried the news to the fort. The fate of the boat's crew saved the settlement from butchery, for Columbus would not sail until he had ascertained

the cause of his men's delay in returning. His state of suspense was great, and, as he had no other boat, it would have been impossible to relieve the settlement, had not a bold sailor, Ladesma, fired by the example of some native captives who had escaped by swimming ashore, offered to reach the land in the same manner. Having ascertained the imminent danger of the besieged colonists, he returned with the tidings.

Still the winds were contrary and Columbus was powerless to aid his brother's party. As an aggravation to his anxiety, the two other caravels drifted out of sight, and he thought he was abandoned. Helpless, alone, and in a state of intense physical suffering, he was overcome by despondency. "I was alone upon that dangerous coast," he says in his letter to the sovereigns, "suffering from severe fever, and worn out with fatigue. All hope of escape was gone. I dragged myself to the highest part of the ship, and with quivering voice and fast falling tears called upon the captains from each point of the compass to come to my succour, but there was no reply. At length, groaning with exhaustion, I fell asleep." As he lay, half sleeping, half waking, he heard a tender voice which spoke words of comfort to him, and, reminding him of all the past help he had received from God, asked him why he feared. "Fear not," the voice finally said. "All these your tribulations are recorded on marble, and not without cause." Columbus arose, strengthened and comforted. Ere long the other ships reappeared, and, a favourable breeze having sprung up, he approached the shore. By means of a raft constructed by Mendez, the eighty colonists were rescued

and everything of value brought away, the caravel in the river being stranded and stripped.

The utmost Columbus could do with his leaking ships was to try to reach Hispaniola, and he gave up all thoughts for the present of going to Spain. The strong ocean currents carried him far to the west of his calculations, the first land sighted being the Caymen Islands. Ere he reached them, one caravel had sunk in mid-ocean, and the other two were rapidly settling down. However, he reached Cuba, where he hoped to beach and repair his vessels; but contrary winds drove him on to the coast of Jamaica, where, towards the end of June, he ran the two caravels high and dry on shore, and, thatching them with leaves, converted them into dwellings. They could not have remained afloat another hour. Here, then, he found himself, leagues from any civilized spot, with no means of communicating with the outer world, or of informing the sovereigns of Spain of the important discoveries he had made.

Such was the end of his last voyage. In spite of its disastrous termination, and of his disappointment about the strait, he was satisfied with the result as a whole. All the same, he knew that the world would consider the voyage a failure, which they would probably attribute to his mismanagement. "Let those," he wrote, "who are in the habit of fault-finding and censuring ask, while they sit in security at home: 'Why did you not do so and so under such and such circumstances?' I only wish that they themselves had to make the voyage." He justly regarded his discoveries as most important to the interests of Spain,

and, remembering how the fruit of his former voyages had been snatched from him, he kept the bearings of Veragua a secret from everyone, and defied any one of his pilots to make his way back there. "This," said he, "is not a child to be left to the care of a step-mother. I can never think of either Hispaniola or Paria without weeping. Their case is past cure, but I trust that their example will cause these regions to be treated differently."[1]

[1] Letter to Sovereigns from Jamaica.

## CHAPTER XVII

### CASTAWAY

### 1503–1504

In spite of his happy prognostications about his recent discoveries, Columbus knew that for himself life was over, and, most likely, literally over, for there seemed but little probability of rescue coming before he succumbed to his increasing ill-health. It was with this contingency in view that he penned a farewell letter to the sovereigns, bearing the date of the 7th of July 1503. In this letter, speaking almost as one from beyond the grave, and feeling nearly sure that he would never again speak face to face with either of them, he referred to their conduct to him in a manner which affection and loyalty might have forbidden him to do under other circumstances. "The honest devotion I have always shown in your Majesties' service," he wrote, "and the so unmerited outrage with which it has been repaid, will not allow me to keep silence, however much I might wish it. . . . I am in a ruined condition. Hitherto I have wept for others; may Heaven now have mercy on me, and may the earth weep for me. With regard to temporal things, I have not even a blanca for an offering; and

as for spiritual things, I have ceased here in the Indies from being able to practise my religion. Solitary in my trouble, sick, and in daily expectation of death, cut off from the holy sacraments of the Church, how forgotten will be my soul if it be separated from the body in this foreign land. Weep for me, all ye who have charity, truth, and justice. . . . If it please God to rescue me from this place, I beseech you graciously to allow me to make a pilgrimage to Rome and other holy places."

Columbus wrote thus only a week after his shipwreck. He expected either speedy death or rescue, and probably little dreamt that he would spend twelve months of physical and mental suffering in the stranded hulks. That year of enforced inaction was, however, far from being wasted, and though unable, from his infirmities, to take an active part in any of the measures for rescue and safety, his mind was as busy as ever, and, taking up his pen, he first composed a canticle on the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, one of his few compositions which have escaped destruction. Later he whiled away the weary months by adding notes and reflections to his *Libro de las Profecias*, the manuscript of which he had with him.

Nearly all the stores were expended when the two vessels were wrecked; but, fortunately, the natives of Jamaica were kindly and hospitable, and helped the castaways in their dire necessity. In this dark bit of his life Columbus had by his side one friend—the most true and faithful he possessed save his brothers. The very name of Diego Mendez is as a ray of light

in the long, shameful story of malice and treachery connected with the great discoverer's career. Mendez, with extraordinary energy, traversed the island and organized the relief which the Indians were quite willing to give in exchange for trinkets and baubles. Then, knowing that such supplies could not last indefinitely, he undertook to go in a canoe to Hispaniola —a distance of forty leagues—to procure assistance. The account of the generous way in which his offer was made is thus graphically told by himself[1]:—

"Ten days after this the Admiral called me aside, and spoke to me of the great peril he was in, addressing me as follows: 'Diego Mendez, my son, not one of those whom I have here has any idea of the great danger we stand in except myself and you; for we are few in number and these wild Indians are numerous. . . . I have thought of a remedy, if you consider it advisable, which is that someone should go in the canoe you have purchased, and make his way to Hispaniola. . . . Tell me your opinion.' To which I answered: 'My lord, I distinctly see the danger in which we stand, but with respect to the passage in the canoe, I look on it not merely as difficult but as impossible, and I know not who would venture to encounter so terrible a danger.' The Admiral did not agree with this opinion, and addressed strong arguments to show I was the person to undertake the enterprise. To which I replied: 'My lord, I have many times put my life in danger to save yours, and God has wonderfully protected me. In consequence, there have not been wanting murmurers who have

[1] Select Letters.

said that you entrust every honourable undertaking to me, while there are others among them who would perform them as well as I. Therefore I think you would do well to summon all the men, lay the business before them, and see if anyone will volunteer to do it. If all refuse I will risk my life in your service, as I have done many times before.'

"Next day the Admiral called the men and opened the matter to them as he had done to me. When they heard it they were silent, and some said it was out of the question to speak of such a voyage. . . . I then arose and said: 'My lord, I have but one life, and am willing to hazard it in your service and the welfare of all here, for I trust in God that, in consideration of the motive that actuates me, He will give me deliverance as he has done before.' When the Admiral heard my determination he rose and embraced me, and, kissing me on the cheek, said: 'Well did I know there was no one here but yourself who would dare to undertake this enterprise. I trust in God our Lord that you will come out of it victoriously as you have done in other things.'"

Diego's perilous voyage, undertaken in two canoes by himself, Bartholomew Freschi, a Genoese, and twelve other Spaniards, with Indian rowers, was blessed, though the whole party was in the last extremity of exhaustion when Hispaniola was reached. Mendez sent his companions to San Domingo to interest the colony on behalf of the Admiral, while he made his way to Xaragua, where Ovanda was residing, making his name execrable to future generations by his massacres in that province. But so

jealous was the Governor of Columbus, and so fearful lest even now, though destitute and perhaps dying, he might come and claim the government of Hispaniola, that he would not let Diego leave his side for seven months. During that time Mendez, with pardonable suspicion, never allowed the letter to the sovereigns, with which the Admiral had entrusted him, to leave his person.

The only step taken by Ovanda, when he heard of Columbus's imminent distress, was to send a caravel under command of Diego de Escobar to pay a tentative visit to the castaways' camp at Jamaica. He did not even land, but made his inquiries from a distance, and, having sent the shipwrecked crews a derisive present of a side of bacon, he sailed away and left them to their fate. It is evident that the sole object of the visit was to verify the account given by Mendez, and ascertain whether Columbus were still alive. Whatever the motive, it was inexcusable to have sent no provisions, and the omission must expose Ovanda to the imputation of a desire for the starvation of his rival.

After seven months the Governor allowed Mendez to depart, letting him make his journey to San Domingo on foot, exposed to great privations and peril, for he had to run the gauntlet of what natives had survived the massacres, all of whom were in a state of exasperation and killed every Spaniard on whom they could lay hands. But Diego's guardian angel protected him, and he reached San Domingo in safety. With indefatigable energy he bought and fitted out a caravel to be sent to the relief of Columbus,

under the command of Freschi, while he himself went with all speed to Spain to deliver the Admiral's dispatches to the sovereigns with his own hands. He was wise enough to trust no one but himself.

At the time that Escobar arrived off Jamacia on his insulting mission, Columbus was in a far worse plight than when the brave Mendez had left him. Even in their common distress there were found rebels to turn against the dying hero. Most of his companions on his fourth voyage had been of his own selection, and had served him more faithfully than he was wont to be served. Two brothers, however, named Porras, had been forced upon him by Fonseca. Columbus had mistrusted these men from the beginning, and it was now proved that his suspicions were well founded. The elder, Francisco, persuaded his brother and forty men to join him, and, having tried without success to murder the Admiral on his bed of sickness, they seized two canoes and endeavoured to reach Hispaniola. A storm, however, overtook them, and though they brutally threw the Indian rowers overboard to lighten the canoes, they drifted back on Jamaica, where they led a life of licence.

Their brutality and licentiousness alienated the natives, who, revenging themselves on the innocent with the guilty, stopped all their supplies to the white men. The castaways must have perished had not Columbus's scientific knowledge come to their aid. He predicted to the natives a total eclipse of the moon, which he described to them as a sign of God's anger with them for their treatment of the Spaniards. When darkness actually came over the

cloudless night, the Indians trembled, and implored Columbus's intercession with God, and made lavish promises of future help, faithfully kept even when their fear was over.

Porras's rebellion was subdued by the Adelantado. The leader was taken prisoner and kept in chains, and the remainder of the mutineers submitted. Columbus showed his generosity by giving them a free pardon when relief came at last. He could not, he said, show resentment against them, seeing what they had suffered on the voyage.

Columbus and his shipwrecked companions had lived for a whole year in the thatched hulks when relief came by means of the caravel bought by Mendez, accompanied by another which Ovanda had been shamed into sending by the public feeling at San Domingo. However much the colonists might turn against Columbus in their own way, they could not allow the man who had supplanted him to let him die like a dog.

When Columbus landed at San Domingo on the 13th of August 1504, Ovanda scarcely needed his written assurance, demanded without delay, that he had no intention of claiming the government of Hispaniola, to which he had every right, seeing that Ovanda's two years of office had expired. But the hand of death was most evidently on the great discoverer, and the supplanter saw at a glance that he had nothing to fear. This did not prevent him from betraying his hostility by setting Porras free from his captivity as soon as he landed.

No sooner was Columbus in Hispaniola than he

desired to leave it, and, as a matter of fact, sailed for Spain two months after his arrival. He could have left sooner, but felt it to be his duty towards his heirs to try to collect the dues which were owing to him, for his interests during his last absence had been not only neglected, but wilfully hindered, and he foresaw that unless he exerted himself now he would end his days in actual destitution. But he soon cast aside such considerations as these, and sailed for Spain without attempting to complete his arrangements, so impossible did he find existence in Hispaniola.

His humility would have enabled him to endure his position as a subordinate under the sway of another governor, had that governor been just in his dealings; but it was not so. Hispaniola, the earthly paradise Columbus had discovered twelve years before, with its kindly, childlike, innocent inhabitants, was bathed in their blood, and the souls with which he had hoped to enrich the kingdom of God were buried in hopeless darkness. The whole island was overrun and contaminated by those on whom first Roldan and then Bobadilla had imposed the law of licence. The natives were torn from their homes, and every feeling and instinct they had were outraged. They were driven like cattle, laden like mules, scourged and tortured with every refinement of Spanish cruelty, till more than half perished, and the remainder turned in their despair on their persecutors and retaliated in every way within their power.

Those who had kindled the fire sought to justify their misdeeds before the new governor by accusing the Indians of rebellion against the rule of their white

conquerors; and Ovanda, the man of the gentle-hearted Isabella's choice, but a butcher in very deed, set to work without inquiry to exterminate the natives like noxious reptiles. He attacked each of the five provinces in turn without going through even a form of judgement, and the one unvarying order he gave his soldiers was to kill every Indian they came across.

When Columbus arrived from Jamaica, six-sevenths of the native population had perished at the hands of the Spaniards, either by the sword or the barbarities of slavery. The history of the massacre of Xaragua is one of the darkest episodes in the annals of the world. Behechio and Anacaona had remained curiously loyal to the Spaniards, in spite of the havoc wrought in their midst by Roldan and his lawless followers. But it was enough for these very miscreants, in self-defence, to inform Ovanda that the cacique and his sister were meditating rebellion, for the Governor to believe the report, and carry into Xaragua the war of extermination with which he was occupied when Diego Mendez joined him.

He accomplished his end by the foulest treachery. Having proclaimed that he was going to make a friendly visit, surrounded by the full pomp of his office, Behechio and his sister received him with the same lavish hospitality they had on a former occasion shown towards the Adelantado; and all the minor caciques of the province, eighty-two in number, were assembled to prove their loyalty to the terrible white man. Ovanda returned their hospitalities, and arranged a grand display of Spanish feats of arms, to witness which he assembled all the caciques in a

wooden building. At a given signal the building was set on fire, and the inmates burnt alive, and every native who could be caught put to the sword. Anacaona, the native poetess, whose weak point was her admiration of and trust in the Spaniards, was seized in her house—so prettily decorated in imitation of the ways of the conquerors—and, being condemned without trial as a traitress, was carried off to San Domingo and hanged publicly.

Higuey, the province to the east of the island, shared the fate of Xaragua. Driven to desperation by the brutalities of the Spaniards, the natives, of fiercer blood than the other tribes, had retaliated on the white men with deadly effect. Cotabanama, the gigantic cacique, had hitherto been respected by the conquerors for his noble qualities, but now he was hunted down by Ovanda's orders and hung as soon as he was captured. The fastnesses and hiding-places of the mountainous province made it difficult to catch the fugitives, and as a punishment for the trouble they gave their pursuers, they were tortured before they were killed. In the other three provinces, the Vega, Marien, and Maguana, the work of extermination was easier, for slavery had already done half the work, and broken the spirit of the survivors.

What wonder that Columbus set aside all thought of the temporal prosperity of himself and his heirs, rather than dwell one day longer than necessary on soil drenched with the blood of innocent men, women, and children, whom, alas for him! he had been the means of delivering to their tormentors, by bringing their existence to light. The condition of the natives

of Hispaniola hung like a dark cloud over the remaining months of his life.

Nor was he alone in this suffering. Far away in Spain, though he knew it not, Isabella of Castile lay on her death-bed. He never saw her again, and had no opportunity of laying before her the state of her poor dusky vassals; but in this Mendez had been before him. When Diego arrived in Spain, the bearer of Columbus's letter, he had a long private audience with the Queen, and gave her an account of the atrocities which were taking place under Ovanda's rule, to which he could testify as an eye-witness. The news embittered her last days, and her dying request to her husband was that Ovanda should be recalled.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CROOKED WAYS MADE STRAIGHT

### 1504–1506

COLUMBUS returned to Spain for the last time on the 7th of November 1504. His intention was to go straight to the Court, but at Seville he was taken ill, and remained there helpless for months. He did not know how near her end Isabella was, and as soon as he knew that his health would not permit him to see her face to face and obtain redress for his own wrongs and those of the natives of Hispaniola, he wrote several urgent letters to her. He knew that if he did not now obtain the restoration of his dignities they must remain forfeited. He wrote as a petitioner, for he surmised—and rightly—that the accounts sent home by Porras, supported by Ovanda, and insinuated by Fonseca, would be believed, and censure passed on him even now, at the eleventh hour of his life. He pleaded almost pathetically for a fair hearing, and protested that he had served their Majesties with as much zeal and diligence as if it had been to gain paradise; and reiterated that, if he had failed in anything, it had been from want of knowledge and power. His enemies always fought in the dark, and

he lived in dread of he knew not what disgrace or degradation. Isabella never received these petitions for justice and asseverations of loyalty, which she assuredly would have considered superfluous. Probably she never even knew that Columbus had returned to Spain, for she died on the 20th of November, barely two weeks after he had landed at San Lucar. When the news of her death reached him he was filled with dismay, and at once wrote to impress on his son Diego that their first duty on earth was to pray for the repose of her soul. He mourned her unselfishly, for his deep and loyal love for her were hard to describe, and if some thoughts of self obtruded themselves, who could wonder, for with her he lost his one hope of obtaining justice.

Columbus remained till May 1505 at Seville—the headquarters of his active enemies. Not only was he suffering acutely, but he was at the lowest ebb of poverty. His state of penury, which he described in his letter to the sovereigns from Jamaica, still prevailed. "Such is my fate," he had said, "that the twenty years of service which I have passed with so much toil and danger have profited me nothing, and at this day I do not possess a roof in Spain that I can call my own. If I wish to eat or sleep I have nowhere to go but to an inn or tavern, and most times lack wherewithal to pay the bill." On the 21st of December 1504 he wrote to his son Diego, telling him that he lived by borrowing, and urging on him, in consequence, the strictest economy. He had expended almost his last penny in bringing home those of his late companions who wished to return to Spain,

and whose passage their country would not pay. Money was owing to him for his actual services afloat, as also to Bartholomew and Fernando, but he took no active steps to claim this, and spent his energies in trying to obtain the arrears of pay due to the mariners who had accompanied him, though, as he added, some among them deserved punishment rather than recompense.

Poor as he was, he cared little or nothing for money; it was justice and the restoration of his dignities for which he did care. He wrote letter after letter to the King on the subject, as also to Diego, who was at the Court, and to whom he gave instructions how to act. Each letter he wrote was an exercise of heroism, for he suffered such tortures of pain in his hands that he could not hold a pen in the daytime, and it was only by making use of a few hours of comparative ease in the night that he got through his correspondence. Ferdinand, however, took no notice of his appeals, and put him off with affectionate messages. The astute King had no intention of acceding to Columbus's requests, and was playing a waiting game, for he knew that the great man was dying, and that the terrible sufferings to which he had been exposed in the service of Spain during his last voyage were doing their worst as surely as steel or poison.

In spite of his kind messages, Ferdinand wounded Columbus deeply by entirely ignoring him in the various transactions relating to the New World. Personal slights of the kind he accepted, and set aside with his habitual resignation and generosity, but when

the interests of Hispaniola were at stake he asserted himself to the best of his power. On one occasion he took most active measures to assert his own judgement. Being informed on good authority that Ovanda —probably to enhance the importance of the island— had asked, and obtained, the royal sanction for the nomination of an Archbishop and two Bishops for Hispaniola, he wrote to the King for leave to express his opinion. He knew that the very idea of such an appointment was simply ridiculous, there being a mere handful of Christians, fifty at most, in any of the proposed sees, the institution of which would therefore be a mere farce. No notice being taken of his remonstrance, Columbus raised some money and sent Bartholomew to Rome to put the actual state of the case before the Pope. Julius II., who filled the see of Peter, had, it appears, already expressed his surprise that the Viceroy's name was absent from the petition, and, his suspicions having been aroused by the omission, had evaded a direct consent. There is no record of what took place at Rome during Bartholomew's embassage, but its result was that the necessary bull was never dispatched, and no episcopal sees were established in Hispaniola till many years after.

At last, after six months of suffering inaction, Columbus was able—at the cost of what may be called physical agony—to go to the Court at Segovia. He knew that the only shadow of hope of obtaining the restoration of his rights lay in a personal interview with the King. He regarded the compact entered into between him and the sovereigns of Spain as something solemn and sacred. He had fulfilled his

part, and given them a new world, and that they could hold cheap their side of the covenant wounded him as if it were a sacrilege on their part. However, his high sense of religion and honour were a poor match for the astuteness of the King, who by his diplomacy gained the day in exactly the way intended. He would not offend public opinion by openly breaking his promises; but to the end he succeeded in evading the question. Personally, his attitude towards Columbus was most affectionate and considerate; but he treated him as a suffering old man to be cared for, condoled with, and made much of; and when the Admiral with unimpaired vigour pressed his claims, he made proposals and suggested alternatives to gain time.

First, he tried to persuade Columbus to accept an estate and title in Castile; and when this offer was met by an unequivocal refusal, he suggested the appointment of a court of arbitration to settle the matter of the Admiral's titles and privileges. But again Columbus was decided in his refusal, saying that the question had been settled long ago and required no arbitration. "This," he wrote to the King, "is a matter that concerns my honour. As to the rest (the emoluments), do as you think proper. Give or withhold as may be most to your interests."

Columbus felt in duty bound to fight for his rights till the end of his life, but that one interview with the King convinced him that he had nothing more to hope for from him. After his audience, he wrote to Diego Deza, Archbishop of Seville, who, as a simple Dominican friar, had stood by him so faithfully and

upheld his cause at the Junta of Salamanca. "It seems to me that His Highness does not intend to fulfil the promises I received from him and the Queen on their word and seal. To fight against his will would be to fight against the wind. I have done all I had to do. I leave the rest to God, who has always helped me in my need."

And calmly did he leave all to God. He spent the last months of his life in arranging his temporal affairs as best he could, leaving all in the hands of his son Diego, who, he made sure, would eventually have his rights restored to him. He copied and re-attested the codicil to his will made four years before, previous to his departure on his perilous fourth voyage. And on the very day before his death, he appointed his son and Bartholomew, jointly with Juan de Porras, to be his executors, and added a few last wishes, principally in the form of little legacies to those to whom he felt himself indebted. His memory travelled back as far as twenty years, and among his legacies was one of half a mark of silver to a poor Jew whom he had known in Portugal.

Among his last directions was the construction of a chapel in the Vega dedicated to the Blessed Trinity, where three masses were to be said daily, one in honour of the Holy Trinity, another in honour of the Immaculate Conception, and a third for the faithful departed. He designated the spot on which the chapel was to be built as that "where he invoked the Blessed Trinity"—which apparently conveyed a sufficiently precise idea to his friends to make further explanation unnecessary.

The faithful Bartholomew was not with him when he died. Ever ready to do his brother's bidding, he had gone to meet the Infanta Juana and her husband, Philip of Austria, on their arrival in Spain, for the purpose of interesting them in the question of the restitution of the Admiral's rights. As far as he could judge, he succeeded in his object, but it was too late. Ere Bartholomew returned, bearing their friendly messages, the great discoverer had breathed his last at Valladolid, on Ascension Day, May the 20th, 1506.

Strange to say, something of the obscurity which overhangs his birth accompanied his death. The *Valladolid Chronicle*, a contemporary record of minute and even trivial facts connected with the town, makes no mention of his death, and books published some years subsequently speak of Columbus as though he were still alive. Thus did the oblivion of his later years accompany his memory beyond the grave, where crooked ways had been made straight, and truth was no longer confounded with falsehood.

This indifference as to whether he were dead or alive is a clear indication of the small place which the great Genoese held in the estimation of men in the land of his adoption. What is more, this indifference continued for years after his death. It is true that Ferdinand, with a mixture of human respect and, perhaps, tardy gratitude, had his body re-interred with pomp at Seville, having removed it from the humble resting-place in their own cemetery given to it by the sons of St. Francis, who attended him to the last and in whose habit he died. True also that the Spaniards of Hispaniola, twenty years later, claimed

his body, and buried it at San Domingo, and even refused to leave it to the French when the island became theirs, removing it to Havana, where it still lies. All this posthumous respect was shown to his earthly remains, but the work of his brain was treated as a thing not worth caring about. Out of all his voluminous correspondence only sixteen letters have survived. The history of his four voyages, kept for the benefit of the Holy See, has disappeared, and so have all the notes and charts quoted by the Cura of los Palencios, Las Casas, and Fernando, as existing in their day, and nothing of the kind remains save the epitome of his first journal, the original of even that being lost. The *Libro de las Prefecias* would have been equally lost, had not a precious rough copy of the book been discovered. This contempt in which his writings were held—a contempt which consigned them to whatever was the equivalent of the waste-paper basket in the sixteenth century—is eloquent of the slight appreciation felt for his great work.

Even those who in later centuries have wished to find out something about Columbus's last days have failed, except in the case of a very few details. He died at an inn, and thus we know that to the last the discoverer of the Indies possessed no home. It is, furthermore, briefly stated that he received the last sacraments, and that his sons were by his side. The exception to the general oblivion is the special mention made by Fernando, as an eyewitness, of the chains which were hung before his eyes when he died. His sole parting request concerned those chains, which he directed should be buried with him

in his coffin. Maybe it was his deep, undying love of humiliation which made him thus cling to these tokens of his shame; or, maybe, he feared that his sons might be stirred by the sight of them to avenge his wrongs. Be this as it may, there, to this day, lie the chains among his dust, as he awaits the resurrection in the far island of Cuba. Simple to the end, he made no speeches, gave no exhortation. When the last dread moment drew near, and the hand of death was on him, Christopher Columbus lifted up his feeble voice and said, "Domine, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum," and died as calmly and gravely as he had lived.

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